May 18, 1998

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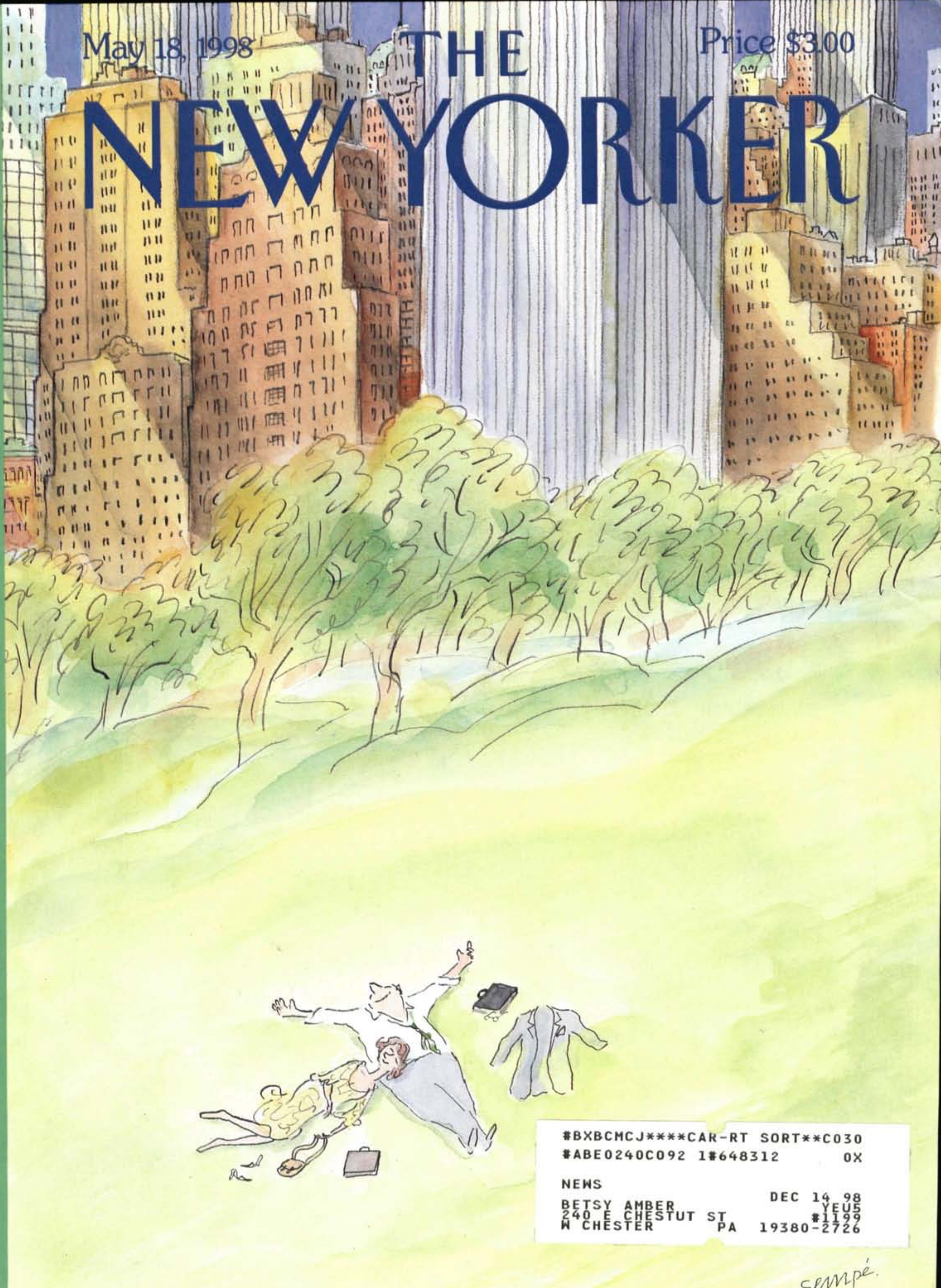

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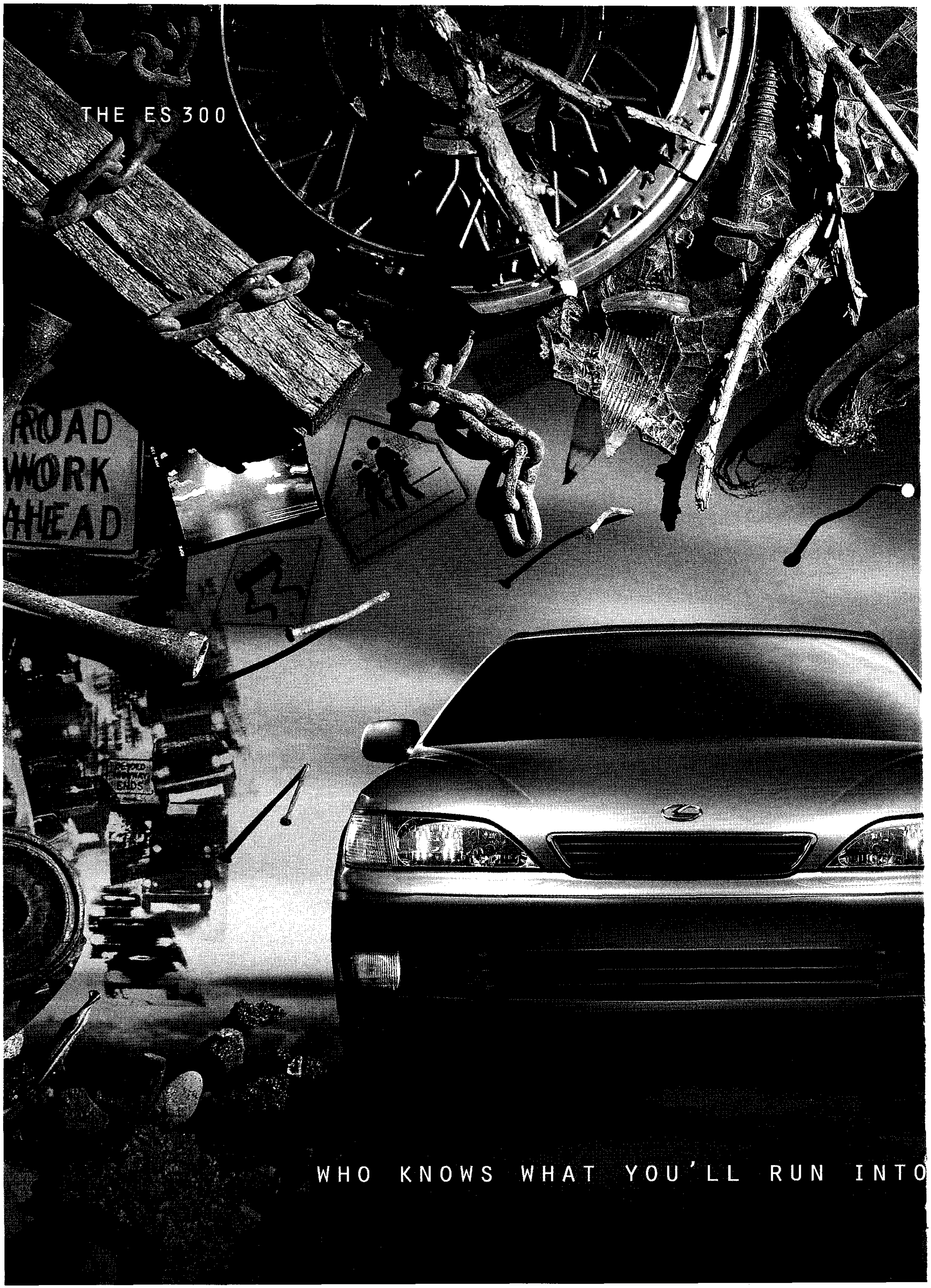
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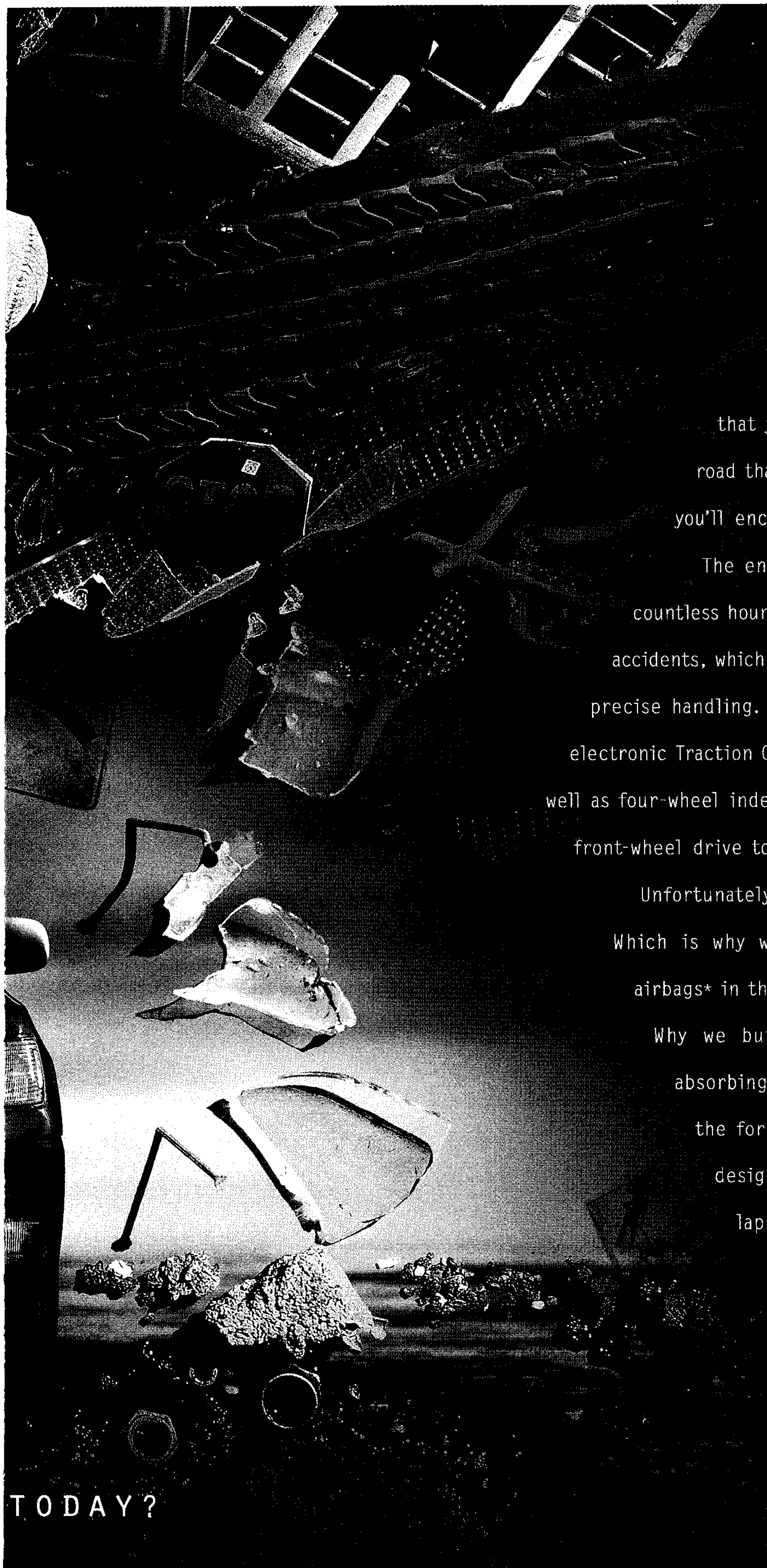

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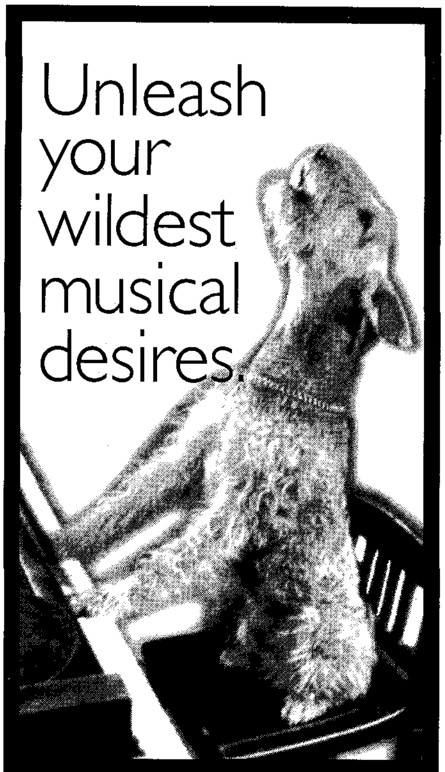

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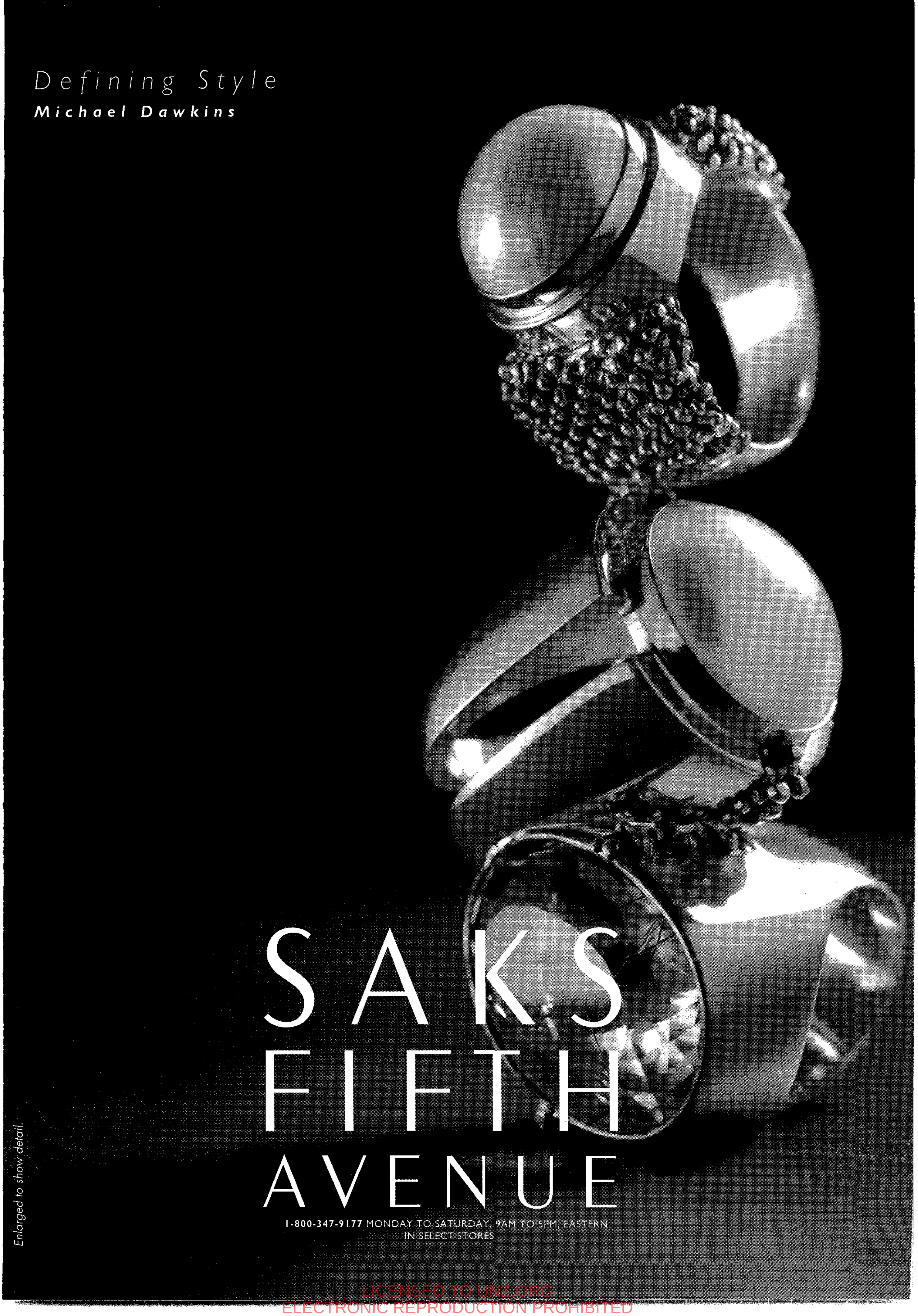
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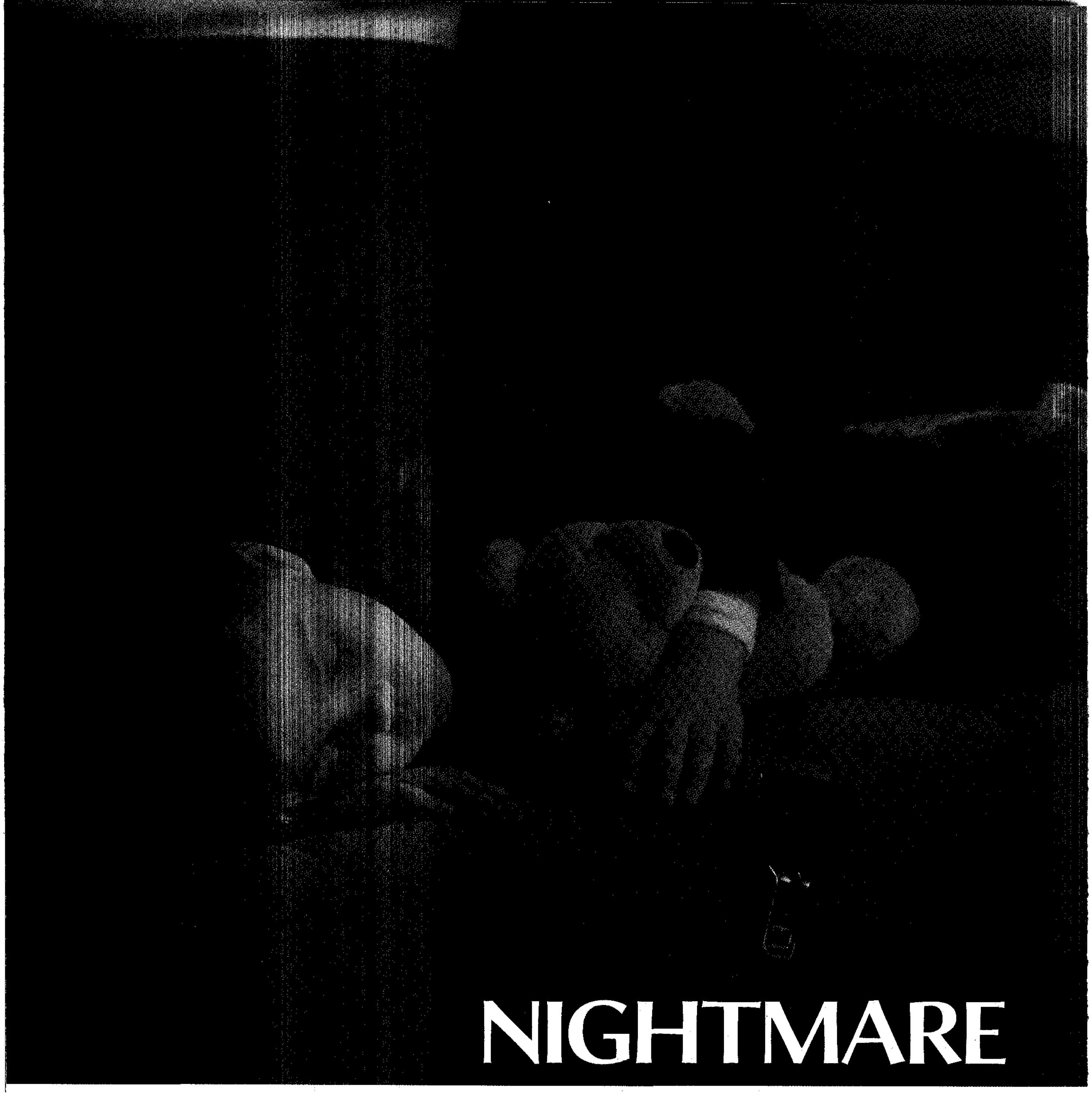

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COMMENT

MOUSE HUNT

Forget cancer. Is there a cure for hype?

HERE it was: a breakthrough in cancer research. And you could believe it, because it was in the *Times*. Up at Harvard Medical School, the *Times* reported, Drs. Judah Folkman and Michael O'Reilly had shown that two proteins, angiostatin and endostatin, could eradicate tumors in laboratory mice without inducing drug resistance. The story outlined Dr. Folkman's visionary strategy—instead of attacking tumors directly, block the growth of the blood vessels that feed them—and described the excitement running through the cancer-research community.

The reaction? Well, when the stock market opened the next day, the share price of EntreMed, a small biotech company that was developing the drugs, ticked up by three whole dollars. Elsewhere, the *Times* story—which ran on November 27, 1997, on page A28—sparked little follow-up. After all, as the paper had noted, the company would have to figure out how to manufacture the drugs before it could even start clinical trials, and the reporter, Nicholas Wade, had been careful not to overhype the findings, predicting only that the drugs "may well prove relevant to the treatment of human cancer."

Yet now, not quite six months later, the news about endostatin and angiostatin is suddenly bigger than Monica and Godzilla combined. On Sunday, May 3rd, the *Times* ran the very same story, but this time at the top left-hand corner of the front page, with the headline, "A CAUTIOUS AWE GREETS DRUGS THAT ERADICATE TUMORS IN MICE." The article below, however, was longer on awe than on caution. A media frenzy instantly ensued. Radio and television carried the story to every corner of the globe. In the *News*, under a gigantic front-page screamer—"OUR BEST HOPE"—the columnist (and cancer patient) Mike McAlary wrote, "Maybe we don't have to die." This time, EntreMed's share price on Wall Street quadrupled, and about a billion dollars changed hands. By Thursday, the fuss was ubiquitous, and the *News's* down-market archrival, the *Post*, indulged itself with a lead editorial that congratulated Dr. Folkman and then used him as a club with which to clobber, among other villains, non-Western medicine, "New Age witch-doctory," political correctness, the animal-rights movement, and the "quasi-terrorism" of AIDS activists. And Random House had agreed to shell out a million dollars for a book about the new therapy. You'd think scientists had found a cure for impotence.

The tale of the two *Times* stories of-

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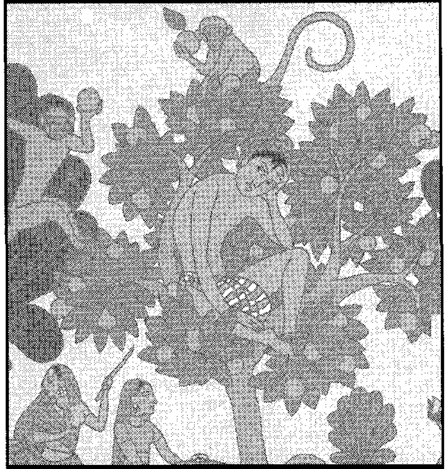

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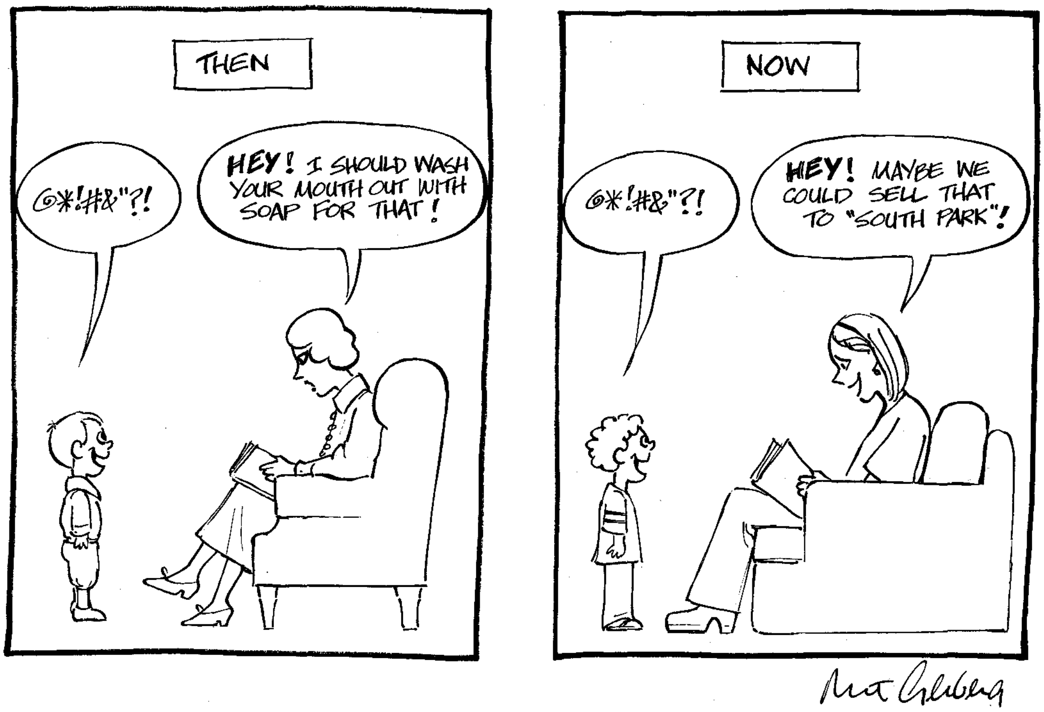
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NOW
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HEY! MAYBE WE COULD SELL THAT TO "SOUTH PARK"!

fers a controlled study in the pathogenesis of hype, because the facts had not changed a bit between November and May. Even Folkman is scratching his head. "I'm puzzled by the response, because this is five months old," he says. The two stories were based on the same Folkman-O'Reilly study, which in November had at least been newly published, in the journal *Nature*. The May *Times* story contained no new scientific information but merely garbed the old information in new superlatives. It had no "peg"—no recent event, no new development of the sort that editors usually require stories to include, lest their papers become arbitrary miscellanies. What prompted the May story, it has since emerged, was that James D. Watson, the Nobel laureate and co-discoverer of DNA, sat next to a *Times* reporter, Gina Kolata, at a dinner party and regaled her with praise of Dr. Folkman's work. The resulting quote—"Judah is going to cure cancer in two years"—was splashed across the front page a few weeks later, and Ms. Kolata wrote, "Dr. Watson said Dr. Folkman would be remembered along with scientists like Charles Darwin as someone who permanently altered civilization."

Never mind that James D. Watson is not an expert on either drug development or clinical trials. Yes, he directs the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, a research center on Long Island that does work on cancer, but he isn't a clinical investigator. Dr. Bruce Chabner, a former director of cancer treatment at the National Cancer Institute, says, "I think his prediction is based more on hope than on data." Indeed, Watson himself immediately backpedalled, writing a letter to the *Times* in which he claimed that he'd been misquoted.

Nature, in an editorial accompanying the mouse study back in November, had hailed the Folkman group's findings for the possibility not of a cure-all but of a new class of chemotherapy which might evade tumor resistance. Some cancers, such as ovarian cancer, initially respond to chemotherapy but then develop resistance to it, because tumors are prone to mutation. Other cancers, such as prostate cancer and melanoma, are usually resistant from the get go. The new agents, however, according to the new theory, could avoid these problems by attacking the growth of non-mutating blood vessels. In the study conducted in Dr. Folkman's lab, the theory was borne out, and that's what scientists were all excited about. The fact that tumors didn't grow back in the mice was unexpected but hardly unprecedented. Indeed, there are therapies with equally impressive records in animal studies which are already undergoing human trials.

Unfortunately, success in animals does not predict commensurate success in humans. Also—as *Nature* pointed out but the *Times* did not—drug resistance is just one of many factors that stymie anticancer drugs. The fact that a drug works in mice may give you slightly better odds, but you'd like to see some bigger animals try it. And then a few people, too. Right now, versions of endostatin and angiostatin that could be used on humans are not even available. EntreMed says it is at least a year away from having the drugs in sufficient quantities to test them. After that, another year or two must pass before we know whether these drugs work. And even then, Folkman says, "I don't see this as replacing other therapies. It would be used in addition to chemotherapy, radiotherapy, even to gene therapy and vaccine therapy."

Medical hype is a particularly virulent organism, playing, as it does, on our ingrained hopes for survival and sustained youth. An unavoidable part of the syndrome is that a handful of élite science journalists hold more power over medicine than any doctor in America does. Before angiostatin and endostatin, Viagra was the mother lode. Since formal trials are yet to be published in the medical literature, doctors learned about Viagra the same way everyone else did: they read about it in the paper. It's the same way they learned that Propecia could reverse hair loss, that fen-phen is a miracle drug that will save obese patients' lives, and (a year later) that fen-phen is an evil drug that damages your heart valves.

Medical schools teach doctors to read the studies closely and identify the flaws and uncertainties before they even think about changing the care they are providing. But desperate patients, newspaper clippings in hand, clamor for the latest pill, so doctors make do with what's in the news and what the drug-company detail men tell them. Reporters quickly move on to write up the next big drug, and doctors are left to react and improvise, practicing medicine by their wits. It's up to them, and to their patients, to develop immunity to the recurring epidemics of hype. Journalism, alas, cannot be tested on mice. —ATUL GAWANDE

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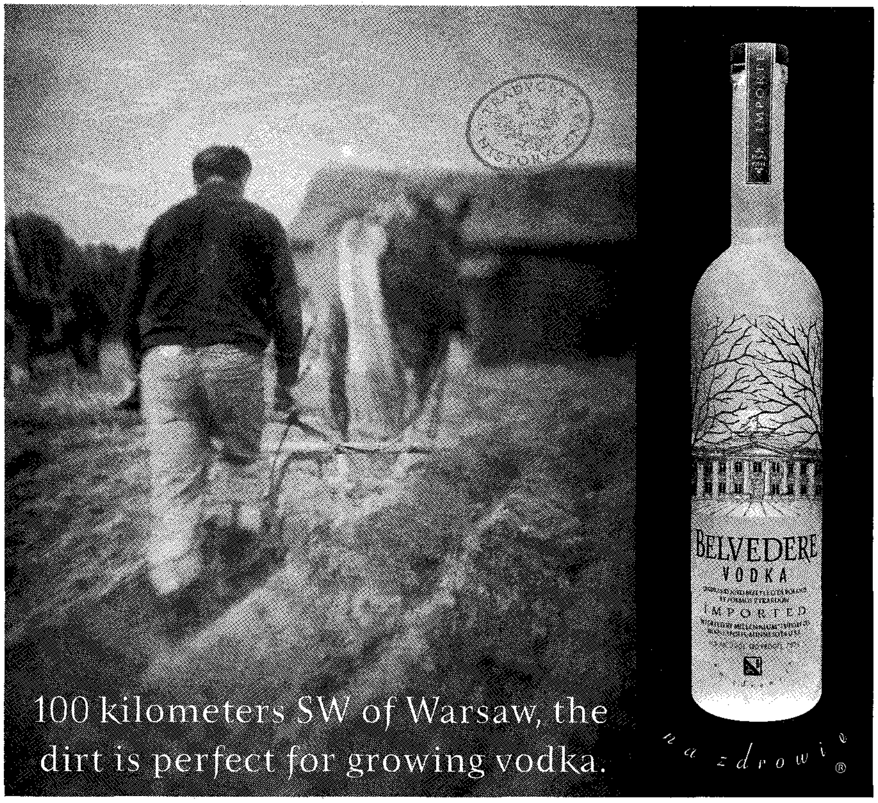
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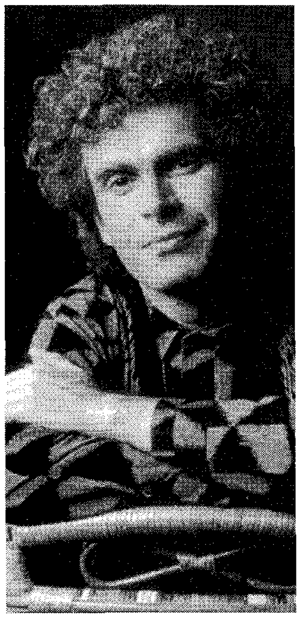

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THE MAIL

CRITICAL DISTANCE

David Denby's shortsighted insistence on the obvious superiority of both American and foreign films from decades ago threatens to overwhelm his legitimate concern about the commodification of the critic's role in today's Hollywood ("The Moviegoers," April 6th). Claiming that the films of the past are sufficient to render new films, like Victor Nunez's "Ulee's Gold" or Takeshi Kitano's "Hana-Bi," little more than pale imitations only adds to the division between critic and audience which Denby deplores. It is incumbent upon today's film critics to acknowledge our debts to cinema's past without weeping in its sacred shadow.

JASON W. PERSSE
New York City

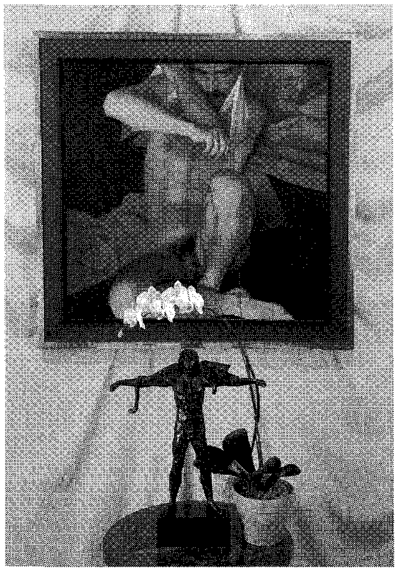
I understand where Mr. Denby is coming from when he writes that modern films are concerned more with spectacle than emotion, but I found myself thinking that he seemed, well, *old.* Denby wasn't reared with the same cultural indicators as Hollywood's favored target audience (males aged fourteen to thirty-four), and as a result doesn't value the same elements in popular entertainment. I was born in 1972, and was reared on innovation and technological spectacle. While critics like Denby are decrying a movie like "Independence Day" as a symptom of cultural deterioration, I'm loving every minute of it. Why? Because, technologically speaking, it's the next link in the chain: from "Star Wars" to "Terminator 2" to "Independence Day" to "Men in Black." The adrenaline rush has supplanted the tearfest, but the effect—emotional catharsis—is the same. I don't claim that the new Hollywood, with its market-driven products and its rejection of classical storytelling, is better, but, as a willing and understanding participant, I can't dismiss it, either.

DAVID GILBRETH
Los Angeles, Calif.

DEAF, NOT DUMB

Joseph Epstein's "Sound and Silence" (Books, April 13th) presents an overly benign portrayal of Alexander Graham Bell's involvement with the deaf. Although Bell worked hard to mainstream the deaf population, many of his contemporaries saw the measures he supported as instruments to undermine the solidarity of the deaf community. In an 1883 lecture, for example, Bell made a divisive (and decidedly eugenic) proposal: "Those who believe as I do," he said, "that the production of a defective race of human beings would be a great calamity to the world, will examine carefully the causes that lead to the intermarriages of the deaf with the object of applying a remedy." Bell did offer much to the world, but even as we celebrate his accomplishments we must also recognize his weaknesses.

MICHAEL J. BRENNER
Chicago, Ill.



JERRY L. THOMPSON

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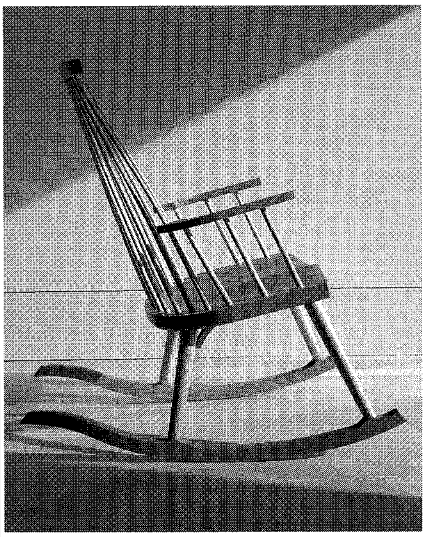

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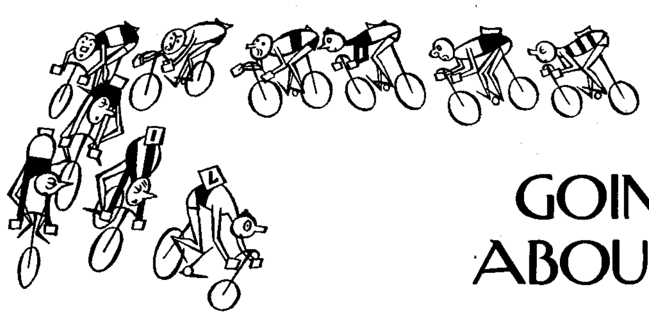
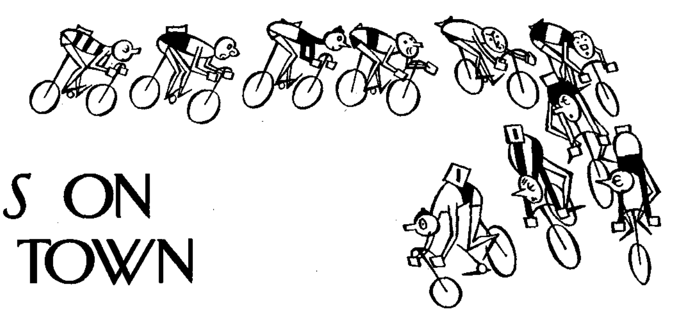


GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN



THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

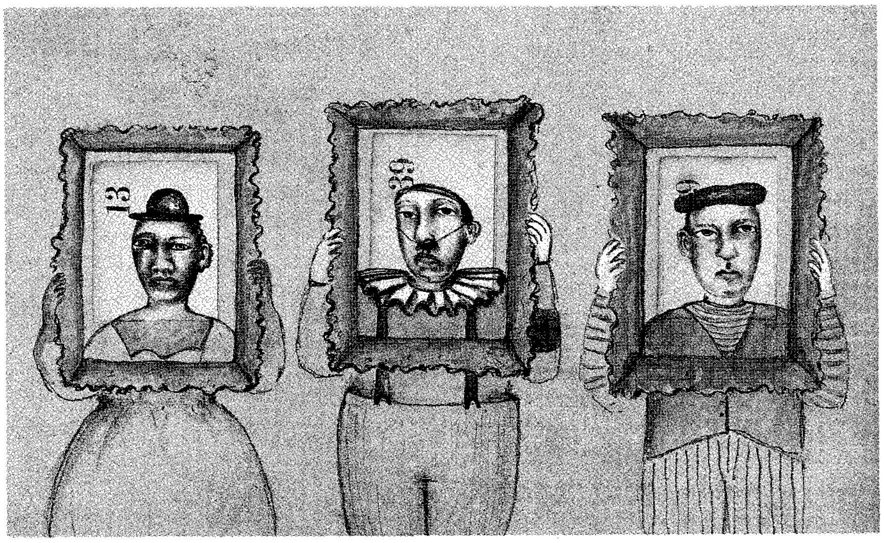
The Caucasian Chalk Circle—Brecht's parable play, in a staging by Andrei Serban with music by Elizabeth Swados. Previews begin May 15. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

Labor Day—A. R. Gurney has revived a character from "The Cocktail Hour" for this semiautobiographical comedy, about a playwright who tries to revise his latest work during a family holiday. Previews begin May 14. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Mr. Peters' Connections—Peter Falk returns to the stage to portray a retired pilot in Arthur Miller's new play. In previews through May 16. Opens May 17 at 7:15. (Signature Theatre, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

Nasty Little Secrets—A revised version of Lanie Robertson's play about the life and death of the playwright Joe Orton. In previews. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

A New Brain—Malcolm Gets portrays a songwriter awaiting surgery, in a new musical by William Finn ("Falsettos") and James Lapine. Graciela Daniele is the director. Previews begin May 14. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)



The Irondale Ensemble Project's "Degenerate Art," directed by Jim Niesen.

Power Plays—Three one-act comedies written by and starring Elaine May and Alan Arkin, who are joined by Anthony Arkin and Jeannie Berlin. Presented by Manhattan Theatre Club. In previews. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Sarah Bernhardt Comes to Town—A recital by Rachel Kempson and Vanessa Redgrave, based on stories by Chekhov. May 13 at 8. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

The Sea Gull—The Blue Light Theatre Company presents a staging of Chekhov's play, in a translation by Tom Stoppard. Maria Tucci, Angie Phillips, Greg Naughton, Alex Draper, and Mark Blum are in the cast. In previews. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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17	18	19				

Tip-Toes—Carnegie Hall presents a concert staging of George and Ira Gershwin's 1925 musical, as part of its Gershwin Centennial Project. Rob Fisher is the director. Six performances only: May 13 at 7, May 14-16 at 8, and May 17 at 3 and 8. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. 247-7800.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Aloha Las Vegas—A Pan Asian Rep staging of a play by Edward Sakamoto, about a Hawaiian widower who considers moving to Nevada. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 245-2660. Closes May 16.)

Alter Egos—A one-man show written and performed by Jon McGovern. Saturdays at 9:30. (Solo Arts Group, 36 W. 17th St. 591-2719.)

Art—Yasmina Reza's farce is a splendid vehicle for three masterly actors, Victor Garber, Alan Alda, and Alfred Molina. They portray friends whose fifteen-year relationship is threatened when one of them buys a large white canvas for two hundred thousand francs. Directed by Matthew Warchus. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/23/98.) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Beauty Queen of Leenane—The precocious Anglo-Irish playwright Martin McDonagh's riveting winter's tale, set in a rural Irish cottage, about an aged mother and her virgin forty-year-old daughter, who is trapped in a punishing solitude. It's a simple, primitive story, yet it is filled with complex emotional surprises and reversals. (3/16/98) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Bob—This Saratoga International Theatre Institute production, inspired by the work of avant-garde theatre director Robert Wilson, is the first production in the company's two-part exploration of American culture. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

Bobby Supreme—The 29th Street Rep presents a play by J. B. Miller, about the downfall of an Andrew Dice Clay/Howard Stern-style comic. (212 W. 29th St. 465-0575. Closes May 23.)

Boom: The Lost Generation—F. Scott Fitzgerald, Dorothy Parker, Maxwell Perkins, Ernest Hemingway, and other writers and editors make up the cast of characters in this chronicle of New York literary life in the twenties. (CSC Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 279-4200. Closes May 17.)

Bus Riley & Co.—The Willow Cabin Theatre Company presents five short plays by William Inge. (Samuel Beckett, 412 W. 42nd St. 886-1889. Closes May 24.)

Cabaret—Everything in this mesmerizing production of the Kander and Ebb musical seems to ask the audience to what extent we are participating in the events unfolding before our eyes. Here, the dancers at the Kit Kat Klub, the symbol of anything-goes Weimar Germany, look shell-shocked and stigmatized. As the Emcee, Alan Cumming is astonishing—with his bruised-looking body, his huge, knowing eyes, and his satanic energy, he's a spectacle of mixed messages. Natasha Richardson, as Sally Bowles, casts a spectral glow. Directed by Sam Mendes. (4/6/98) (Kit Kat Klub, 124 W. 43rd St. 719-1300.)

The Chairs—The British troupe Théâtre de Complicité's superb staging of Ionesco's one-act tragic farce has established finally and forever the indubitable poetry and genius of the play, written nearly half a century ago. Directed by Simon McBurney. (4/13/98) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Cripple of Inishmaan—Martin McDonagh's bittersweet comedy is probably his best play so far, but Jerry Zaks's heavy-handed, drab production lies there like a lump of soda bread that didn't rise. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes May 17.)

Degenerate Art—A collaborative work from the Irondale Ensemble Project which explores society's periodic fury over art. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 633-1292. Closes May 23.)

The Diary of Anne Frank—Theatrically, this reworking of the 1955 play by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett is an improvement, and the cast is fine. But the play's realism is its fundamental flaw: we can't really recreate for ourselves what Anne's dreadful situation was like. (12/15/97) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Dress to Kill—The British comic Eddie Izzard returns to town with a new show. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391.)

The Dying Gaul—A struggling writer gets seduced by Hollywood, in a new play by Craig Lucas. Mark Brokaw is the director. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

The Empty Beach—From the Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre Company, a drama by the Spanish playwright Jaime Salom. Performances are in English Wednesdays through Fridays and in Spanish Saturdays and Sundays. (304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

Ensemble Studio Theatre—Series A of this year's six-week marathon of one-acts runs through May 17, with plays by Paul Rudnick, Billy Aronson, Barbara Sundstrom, and David Zellnik. The marathon continues through June 14. (549 W. 52nd St. 247-4982.)

DEBORAH BARRETT

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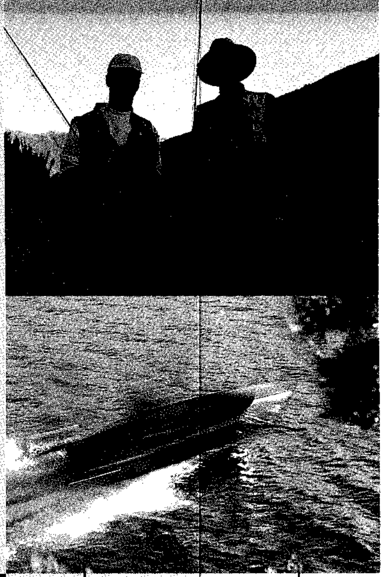

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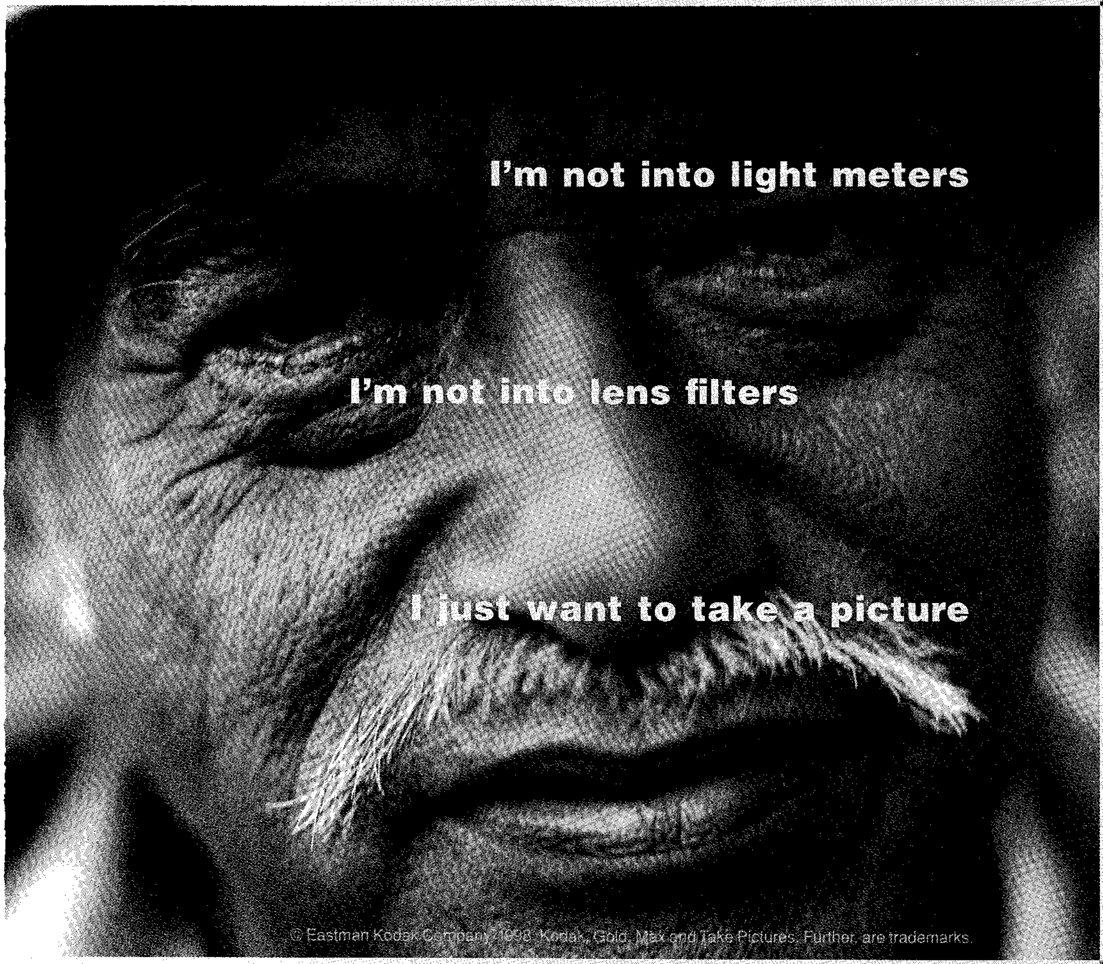
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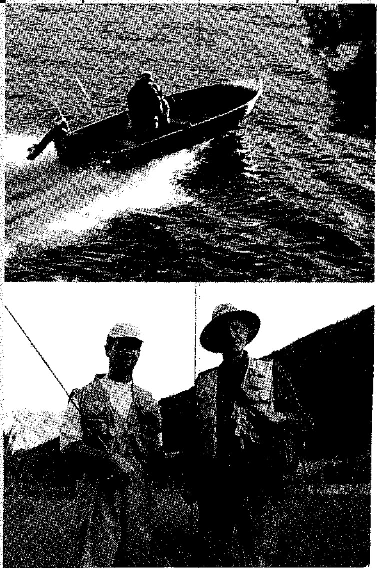

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Everybody's Ruby—A work in progress by Thulani Davis, about a black woman living in Florida in 1952 who is accused of murdering a white doctor. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes May 17.)

The Fastest Clock in the Universe—The British playwright Philip Ridley's comedy about a vain thirty-year-old who celebrates his nineteenth birthday each year. A New Group production. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Freak—In his "pseudo-autobiographical" one-man show about growing up in New York, John Leguizamo takes the audience on a very funny breakneck jaunt down distorted-memory lane. He's a small guy, but his seemingly boneless body and boundless humor fill the large stage, and he absolutely charms, from start to finish. Directed by David Bar Katz. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Craig Lucas's "The Dying Gaul."

ROBERT DEMICHIELI

Golden Child—A graceful, affecting production of David Henry Hwang's 1996 drama, which traces the impact of Christianity and Western ideas on one Chinese family over several generations. Hwang treats it all with wit and humor, so the evening is never heavy-handed. The cast, under the direction of James Lapine, is quite good, and the sets and costumes are simple and lovely. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Hedwig and the Angry Inch—Hedwig, as written and portrayed by John Cameron Mitchell, is a sweet transsexual singer from East Berlin, whose cabaret performance cum stadium act becomes a smart, funny, and very moving exploration of the redemptive, if perhaps fleeting, power of love. (Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

High Society—Based on Philip Barry's play "The Philadelphia Story" and the subsequent movie "High Society," which added a Cole Porter score that the play didn't need, this musical somehow manages to have all the kick of flat champagne. Melissa Errico is miscast in the central role of Tracy Lord, the patrician young woman in need of a few lessons about life: she brings nothing to the part except a generically sweet voice and generic musical-comedy acting. One is grateful for the soul-of-show-business professionalism of John McMartin, who is delightful as a tippling lecher, and for the talents of Anna Kendrick, a twelve-year-old Down-Easter making a winning Broadway début as Tracy's adorably smart-alecky little sister; Stephen Bogardus, Randy Graff, and Lisa Banes are also good. But the missteps here are too many: unattractive sets and costumes, several dull numbers featuring household servants, and a generally lacklustre company. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Honour—This play by the Australian playwright Joanna Murray-Smith examines the relationships between two writers who have been married for thirty-two years (Jane Alexander and Robert Foxworth), a young journalist (Laura Linney), who is writing a profile of the husband and whose affair with him sets the play in motion, and the couple's daughter (Enid Graham). Murray-Smith brings some very smart words to bear on the truth that lies under the truisms of married life—and of the writing life—but the words don't add up to a satisfying, emotionally gripping drama. In the end, you may simply feel that you've seen this story before. Two of the performances, though, lift the play to a level above the merely interesting: Ms. Alexander is warm and wrenching, and Ms. Graham presents a painful picture of a young adult grappling with disillusionment and rage. Gerald Gutierrez directed. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

How to Write While You Sleep—A slumberous young college dropout meets her ideal woman, in an absurdist comedy by Madeleine Olnek. (Soho Rep, 46 Walker St. 334-0962. Closes May 24.)

I Am My Own Cheap Thrill—It's a man's world, and Amanda Vogel has something to say about it in her one-woman show. Thursdays at 10:30. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

Jails, Hospitals & Hip-Hop—Danny Hoch's new one-man show is a series of short monologues by characters concerned with at least one of the above. Mr. Hoch's versatility is astonishing, and at its best the show is perceptive and very funny. But some of the segments fall flat and others go on too long; on the whole, the evening should have been honed to a finer edge. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

Joseph Gabriel Magic '98—Mr. Gabriel comes to New York by way of Las Vegas. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

The Judas Kiss—Liam Neeson portrays Oscar Wilde in David Hare's new drama, in a production by London's Almeida Theatre Company, directed by Richard Eyre. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Miss Coco Peru's Liquid Universe—A comedy about a Bronx boy who makes a round-the-world journey in a wig and a dress. Written by and starring Clinton Leupp. Sundays at 8, through June 28. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391.)

Miss Julie—Strindberg's tragedy is the Pearl Theatre Company's final production of the season. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes May 17.)

Never the Sinner—John Logan's 1985 play about Leopold and Loeb, the teen-age millionaires who murdered a child in Chicago in 1924, sweeps the audience into the boys' twisted friendship without losing sight of the sheer brutality of their "crime of the century"—a balancing act that Mr. Logan and the director, Ethan McSweeny, bring off beautifully. Jason Patrick Bowcutt and Michael Solomon are utterly convincing as the killers. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Quidam—The Montreal-based Cirque du Soleil continues to offer up the virtuosic feats of agility and daring for which it's celebrated, but this latest production is more densely layered with abstract imagery and more challenging to the eye. It unfolds like a richly textured, loopy dream, the kind one might slip into after a Fellini-film marathon. All is magical and good in this universe (the headless man who vanishes into the fog with an umbrella is a serene rather than menacing figure; the fantastically costumed acrobats who fling themselves from hoops in the sky never fall)—and enormous fun. (The big top at Battery Park City. For more information, call 800-678-5440.)

Ragtime—E. L. Doctorow's epic novel is transformed into a historical pageant. It's a big, brave, passionate gamble, masterfully directed by Frank Galati. (2/2/98) (Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

R & J—A promising, if not exactly new, idea—schoolboys escape regimentation and discover their own passion by performing "Romeo and Juliet"—yields a few gripping moments surrounded by a lot of overheated panting, shouting, and foot-stomping. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 354-2220.)

The Sound of Music—Rebecca Luker is enormously winning as Maria, and the seven children in the cast are mostly delightful, but the production doesn't linger in the memory; there may be music in those hills, but the producers didn't seem to find a whole lot of fresh air up there. (4/6/98) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Sunshine Boys—A revival of Neil Simon's comedy about two irascible old vaudevillians, starring Ye Olde Odd Couple of television, Tony Randall and Jack Klugman. The sandpapery friction that the twosome showed on TV is now reduced to lovability. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Too Jewish Two—Avi Hoffman's salute to the original Borscht Belt comics, a sequel to "Too Jewish?" (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

Uncle Philip's Coat—An actor is plagued by memories of an uncle who escaped the Russian pogroms, in a one-man drama by Matty Selman. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797. Closes May 24.)

A View from the Bridge—The Roundabout Theatre's excellent revival of Arthur Miller's tragic story of the longshoreman Eddie Carbone and his obsession with his orphaned niece. (1/5/98) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Visiting Mr. Green—Eli Wallach finds great dignity in the title character, an eighty-six-year-old Jewish widower, in Jeff Baron's sweet if predictable Upper West Side comedy. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.)

Wait Until Dark—Marisa Tomei and Quentin Tarantino star in a revival of Frederick Knott's 1966 suspense drama. Leonard Foglia is the director. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

LONG RUNS

AS BEES IN HONEY DROWN: Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY STRIKES BACK!:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GROSS INDECENCY: THE THREE TRIALS OF OSCAR WILDE:** Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. . . . **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LAST NIGHT OF BALLYHOO:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LIFE:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **MARC SALEM'S MIND-GAMES:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. . . .

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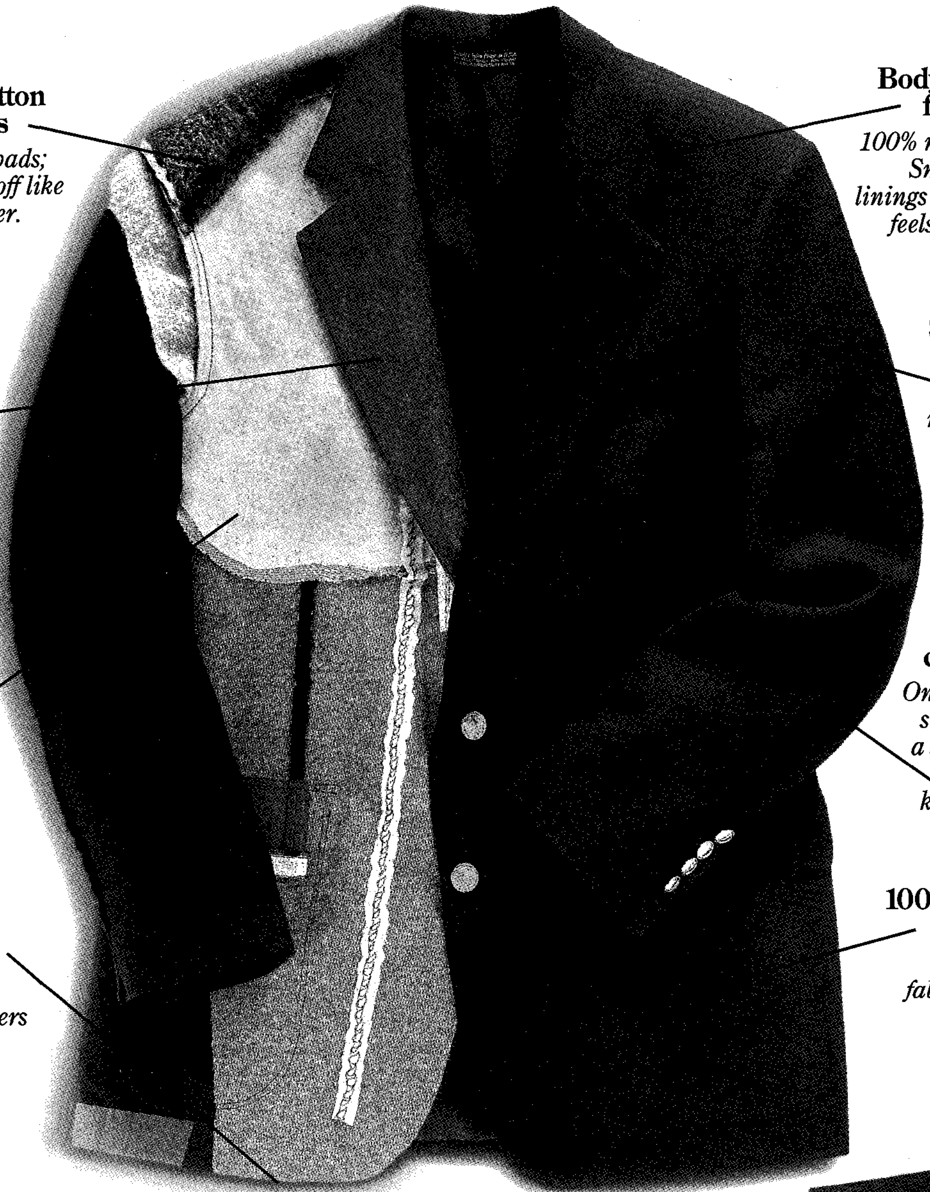

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DANCE

New York City Ballet—May 13 at 8: "Concerti Armonici," "Prodigal Son," and "Glass Pieces." . . . ¶ May 14 at 8: "Serenade," "Two and Three Part Inventions," and "Union Jack." . . . ¶ May 15 at 8: "Le Tombeau de Couperin," "Duo Concertant," "Prodigal Son," and "Glass Pieces." . . . ¶ May 16 at 2: "Concerti Armonici," "Open 19/The Dreamer," and "Union Jack." . . . ¶ May 16 at 8: "Le Tombeau de Couperin," "Duo Concertant," "Two and Three Part Inventions," and "Bournonville Divertissements." . . . ¶ May 17 at 3: "Divertimento No. 15," "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," and Serenade." . . . ¶ May 19 at 8: Divertimento from "Le Baiser de la Fée," "Variations on a Nursery Song," and "Union Jack." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through June 28.)

American Ballet Theatre—May 13 at 2 and 8 and May 14 and May 18-19 at 8: "The Merry Widow." . . . ¶ May 15 at 8: "La Sylphide, Act II," "Romeo and Juliet" pas de deux, "Don Quixote" pas de deux, and "Études." . . . ¶ May 16 at 2: "Les Patineurs," "La Sylphide, Act II," and "Études." . . . ¶ May 16 at 8: "Les Patineurs," "Other Dances," "Romeo and Juliet" pas de deux, and "Études." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Through July 4.)

Hong Kong Ballet—The sixty-member company in "The Last Emperor," a full-length work set to Su Cong's expanded version of his score for the Bertolucci film of the same name. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. May 13 at 7:30, May 14-15 at 8, May 16 at 2 and 8, and May 17 at 2.)

Elisa Monte Dance—Two programs, each with two works by Monte and two by her longtime cohort and fellow former Graham dancer, David Brown. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. May 12 at 7:30, May 13-16 and May 19 at 8, and May 17 at 2 and 7:30. Through May 24.)

"War with the News"—An evening-length work about a salamanderlike species that takes over the world. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. May 14-16 at 8 and May 17 at 3.)

Paul Langland and Wendell Beavers—The choreographers split a bill. (Tisch School of the Arts, 111 Second Ave., at 7th St. 674-8194. May 14-17 at 8.)

"Moonpaths"—Sensedance, Henning Rübsam's eight-member company, performs repertory work and premières the title piece. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. May 14-15 and May 17 at 8:30 and May 16 at 3 and 8:30.)

"These Women"—Amy Pivar presents a dance drama about a woman reviewing her own life after the death of a friend. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. May 13-16 at 8 and May 17 at 3. Through May 23.)

Rebecca Kelly Ballet—In its nineteenth-anniversary season. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. May 14-15 at 8 and May 16 at 3.)

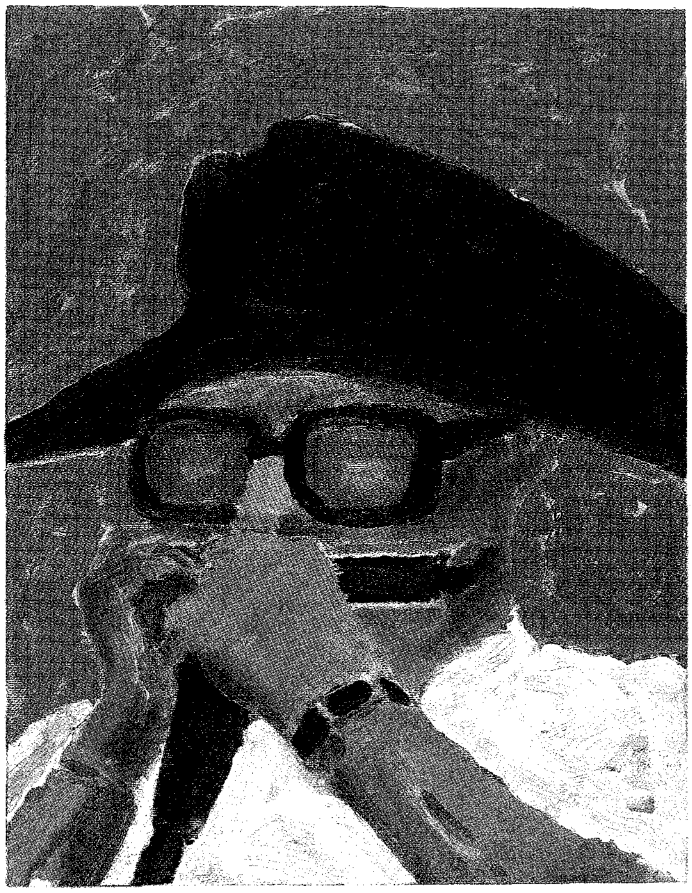
NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Lavender Light—The lesbian-and-gay gospel choir. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. May 15-16 at 8.)

"Cabaret Central Park"—The Stonewall Chorale performs tunes by Gershwin, Kern, Porter, and Weill. (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. For information, call 971-5813. May 16 at 7:30.)

Ron Sexsmith / Kelly Joe Phelps / Katell Keineg—An evening of ascendant singer-songwriters. Sexsmith's latest album, "Other Songs," is another grab bag of acoustic guitar, drum machine, and forlorn, homesick blues. Phelps, a lapsed jazz guitarist, now plays acoustic country blues. The Welsh-born Keineg has a strident vibrato, but her wistfully forthright folk rock has a delicate charm. (St. Ann's Church, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424. May 16 at 8.)



Toots Thielemans, at the Blue Note.

MICHAEL CRAWFORD

Savoy-Doucet Cajun Band—Featuring accordionist Marc Savoy, singer and guitarist Ann Savoy, and fiddler Michael Doucet (of Beausoleil). (See also Tramps.) (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. May 16 at 8.)

Grupo Aymara—The Bolivian folk troupe. (Symphony Space. May 17 at 7.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—May 14-16: The midlife conversion of **BUD SHANK** into a steaming bebopper has done wonders for the veteran alto saxophonist of the California cool school: he sounds rejuvenated, and he's no doubt adding years to his life. May 18: The **TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI BIG BAND,** featuring the bandleader's husband, flutist and tenorist **LEW TABACKIN.** Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—The **TOOTS THIELEMANS** quartet has the floor through May 17. How does Thielemans maintain a competitive edge? No one plays jazz harmonica with as much passion, invention, and control. (Granted, the field is limited.) He's also a supple guitarist and a virtuoso whistler (again, few challengers). On his new album, "Chez Toots," Thielemans wraps himself up in French standards. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—**BOBBY SHORT** has settled in for a two-month stay. . . . ¶ Across the hall, pianist **BARBARA CARROLL** is in charge at Bemelmans Bar.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—**JOHN SCOFIELD** (through May 17) knows how to write a great melody and how to assemble a band. He favors tricky, asymmetrical lines over generic flash. Where his peers tend to be marathon runners, he's an ambler. The key to his appeal is simple: within this cultivated guitarist beats the heart of a twisted bluesman. On his recent release, "A Go Go," a collaboration with the combo Medeski, Martin, and Wood, Scofield flaunts the funk, grabs the groove, and generally proves that, for an emerging father figure to a younger generation, he's still got plenty of juice. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.** Dining.

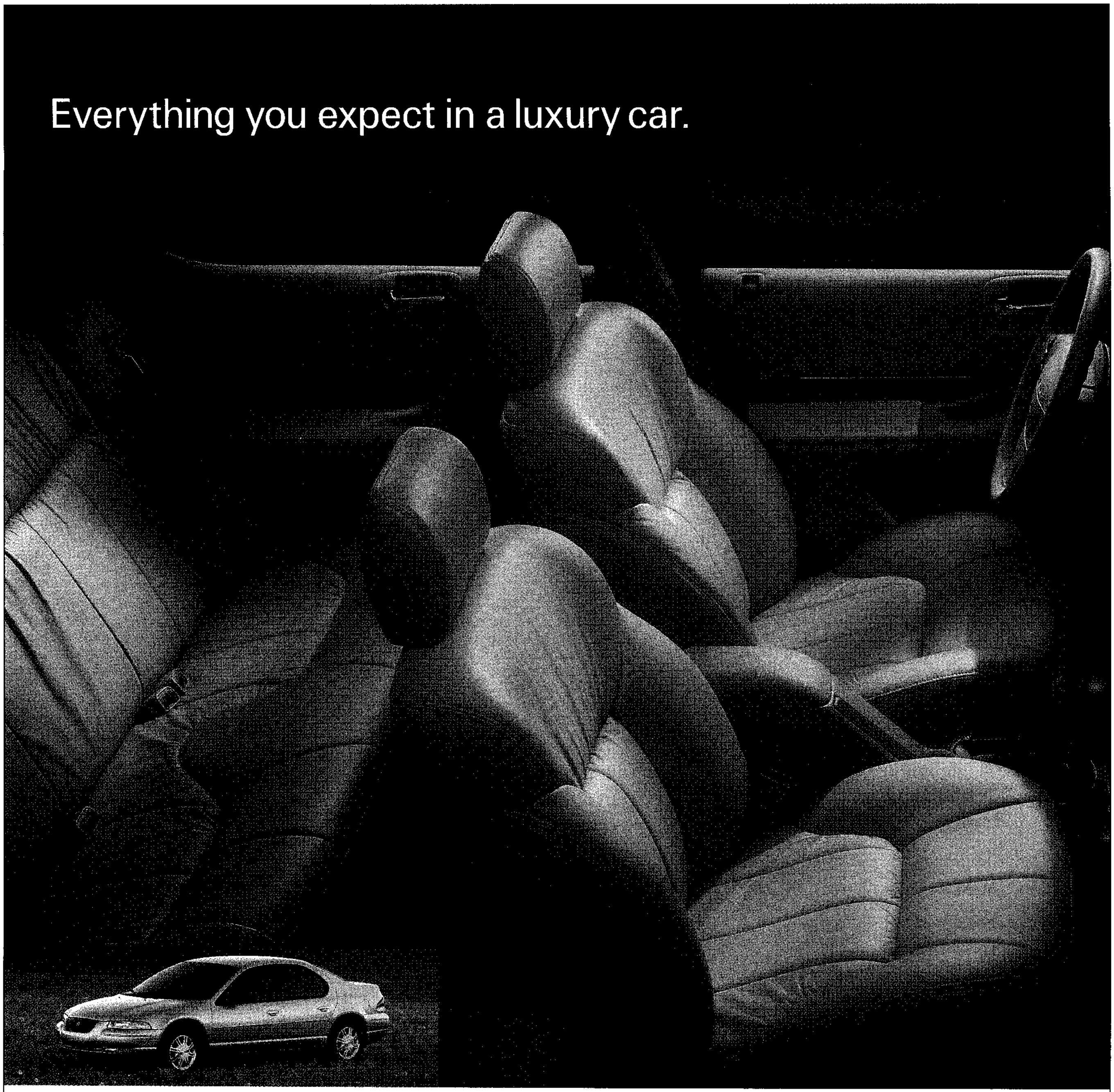
Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through May 16: Recently heard in fine form with trumpeter Tom Harrell, **GREG TARDY** is a no-nonsense post-bop tenor saxophonist who seems intent on making a name for himself.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—The **CLUSONE TRIO** (May 13) has all the warped humor expected of contemporary Dutch jazzmen, as well as a great deal of virtuosity. With the legendary drummer **HAN BENNICK,** the brilliant clarinettist and alto saxophonist **MICHAEL MOORE,** and cellist **ERNST REISEGER.** May 14: An evening of improv with saxophonist **JOHN ZORN.** Also May 14: **OWEN HOWARD'S BAND.** The ad-hoc nature of this assemblage of new-jazz players should be grounded by the rhythmic solidity of drummer Owen Howard and bassist Drew Gress, who were teammates in earlier editions of Howard's band. May 15: **GUITAR OBLIQUE,** a collective of avant-garde six-string slingers who make their guitars sound like anything but: former Living Colour leader **VERNON REID,** downtown savant **ELLIOTT SHARP,** and post-modern experimenter **DAVID TORN.**

Michael's Pub at Bill's Gay Nineties, 57 E. 54th St. (758-2272)—**JULIE WILSON,** the doyenne of New York's chanteuses, has decided to settle in for a permanent, or at least open-ended, residence at this upstairs club room. For the time being, she's crafting her show as a tribute to the legendary showman Florenz Ziegfeld.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. **ROSEMARY CLOONEY** is back, this time to celebrate her seventieth birthday. In addition to her longtime musical director and pianist, John Oddo, she's got a jumping small band with her, including guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, bassist Jay Leonhart, and trumpeter George Rabbai. Through May 2. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Hilary Kole. Closed Mondays.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through May 17: The **CHARLES DAVIS/BARRY HARRIS** quintet. Most bop pianists approach their keyboards like racehorses,



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but Harris is a seducer with a satin touch—he always places melody before virtuosity. Davis, his longtime foil, is a winning tenor and baritone saxophonist. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Try this for a parlor game: name two jazz artists of the past four decades that bassist **BUSTER WILLIAMS** (through May 17) hasn't played with. Good luck. The ubiquitous virtuoso will have pianist **GERI ALLEN** on hand to help generate sparks. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Through May 16: Pianist **BILL CHARLAP** is one of several gifted, thoughtful New York players who are infatuated with lyricism. He may not be the flavor du jour, but his elegance and discernment have a cleansing effect on the city. He's got the great non-sibling **WASHINGTONS**—bassist **PETER** and drummer **KENNY**—as driving rhythm mates.

ROCK, ETC.

Arlene Grocery, 95 Stanton St., between Ludlow and Orchard Sts. (358-1633)—May 20: **JOHN S. HALL**, the once and future front man of King Missile. May 21: Local funk-rockers **FONTAINE**.

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—May 14: Singer-songwriter **TOMMY KEENE** has been making good and great records since 1982, but his talents have been woefully underappreciated. May 16: Dark country blues from Fort Worth native **JOHNNY DOWD**.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—May 15: The sharp, scratchy guitar of veteran **HUBERT SUMLIN**, who played in Howlin' Wolf's band for twenty years.

Coney Island High, 15 St. Marks Pl. (674-7959)—May 15: Groovy instrumental rock with **TRANS AM**.

Fez, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—May 15: The New York trio **LAZY BOY** makes guitar-driven, noirish instrumental music that recalls the work of Chris Isaak (minus the vocals, of course) and of Angelo Badalamenti (particularly for David Lynch's creepy movie "Wild at Heart"). With downtown guitarist **MARC RIBOT** and his latest project, **LOS CUBANOS POSTISOS**. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Once best known as Jackson Browne's backup singer, **VONDA SHEPARD** (May 13) has become a minor musical celebrity ever since her gentle, folk-flavored songs turned up on "Ally McBeal." May 14: **HOLLY COLE**. With **CHRIS STILLS**, a promising young singer-songwriter who happens to be the son of Stephen Stills. May 15: **BAD RELIGION**. May 17: Original grunge masters **THE JESUS LIZARD**.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—May 16: Often hailed as the world's greatest bar band, **NRBQ** can live up to the hype. There just isn't another outfit with such a mastery of virtually every American popular-music idiom, from rockabilly and blues to jazz and swing. May 19: **SPORTSGUITAR**.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—May 13: **GRANT LEE BUFFALO**, in town to support its new album, "Jubilee." May 15: **PATTY GRIFFIN**, a red-headed neo-folkie with the voice of a fire breather, an emotional range to rival Janis Joplin's, and a gift for despair that suggests the recent efforts of Bruce Springsteen.

Rodeo Bar, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—Wild-man guitarist **BILL KIRCHEN** holds forth on May 13. May 14: **FIVE CHINESE BROTHERS** formed more than a decade ago at Columbia University (as the Special Guests) and have since become local heroes and one of smart pop's great journeyman acts. Think Squeeze or Crowded House, only louder, looser, bluesier—more American.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—May 13-14: **TANIA MARIA** sings the Brazilian blues. May 15: The **BROOKLYN FUNK ESSENTIALS** explode the dictionary of funk with fearsome authority. And their multilayered attack, led by a three-man horn section and powered by loping, jazz-inflected muscle, makes them even better live. May 16: Bahian diva **JULIANA AQUINO**. May 18: Twenty-one-year-old New Jersey salsa sensation **FRANKIE NEGRON**. Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—May 13: "Cosmic Cowboy" **JERRY JEFF WALKER**, who wrote "Mr. Bojangles." May 14: **FRANK BLACK**, former leader of the dear departed Pixies. With **LOTION**, the Manhattan rock quartet whose success is almost exclusively due to the group's alliance with Thomas Pynchon. May 15: **SOUL ASYLUM**. Since its 1992 single "Runaway Train" earned a Grammy for best rock song, this Minneapolis quartet has done the requisite thirty-city tour, performed at Woodstock II, and approached self-destruction. It's a tough business. May 16: **DIRTY THREE**. Ever since John Cale set off thunderous squalls with his viola in the Velvet Underground, rock and roll made on anything other than a guitar has been intriguing. This Australian instrumental trio picks up where Cale left off. May 17: The **SAVOY-DOUCET CAJUN BAND** (see Concerts).

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—May 13: An evening of old-school rap with the **SUGARHILL GANG** and **MELLE MEL**. May 15: Former Minuteman **MIKE WATT** barrels into town with his new post-punk solo project.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Ellsworth Kelly on the Roof," an installation of large-scale metal sculptures in the Cantor roof garden. . . . ¶ "Augustin Pajou, Royal Sculptor." Through May 24. . . . ¶ "Pierre-Paul Prud'hon (1758-1823)." Through June 7. . . . ¶ "Elegant China Ware: Paris Porcelain in America." The American designer Henry Mead declared his domestic china "equal in firmness to the French"—he had to promote it somehow, since French porcelain after the Revolution was so affordable (even tastemaker President Washington collected it). Hand-painted vases popular in the Federalist era depict scenes from the War of 1812 and views of old New York, while a harlequin tea set from the same decade seems uncannily modern, in mix-and-match shades of salmon and blue. Through June 14. . . . ¶ "Honoré Lannuier, Parisian Cabinetmaker in Federal New York." French-born Charles-Honoré Lannuier (1779-1819) was among the first to tap into the American hunger for European sophistication. The work of New York's resident "ébéniste de Paris" can be compared with the craftsmanship of such local competitors as Duncan Phyfe: mammoth bedsteads and well-preserved bureaus, in addition to Lannuier's trademark card tables, with their gilded caryatids and sprays of American stars. Through June 14. . . . ¶ "Paul Strand Circa 1916." Through May 31. . . . ¶ "The Nature of Islamic Ornament, Part One: Calligraphy." Through June 28. . . . ¶ "American Furniture and the Art of Connoisseurship." Through Sept. 13. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Two shows, the Chuck Close retrospective and "Artists and Subjects: Picasso to Stella," examine strategies of twentieth-century portraiture. Through May 26 and May 25, respectively. . . . ¶ "Alvar Aalto: Between Humanism and Materialism," a centennial exhibition that includes sketches, photographs, and maquettes of architectural projects by the Finnish modernist. Through May 19. . . . ¶ "The Clutter of Happenstance: Photographs by Robert Cumming." Through June 23. . . . ¶ Twenty-six recently acquired photographs by Garry Winogrand are on view. Through May 31. . . . ¶ "Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons: Spoken Softly with Mama." Through May 26. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)

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(bī′ō-dĭ-vûr′sĭ-tē) *n.* The spectacular variety of life on Earth, and the essential interdependence among all living things. (*See* the new **Hall of Biodiversity** opening May 30 at the **American Museum of Natural History**.)

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Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"China: 5,000 Years." Through June 3. . . . ¶ "Visions of Paris: Robert Delaunay's Series." Through May 24. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"A Century in Crisis" comprises the contemporary portion of the institution's blockbuster exhibition "China: 5,000 Years." Through May 25. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

TABLES FOR TWO

Follonico, 6 W. 24th St. (691-6359)—After your first trip to chef Alan Tardi's charming Flatiron District restaurant, it's easy to sound like one of those giddy travellers just back from Italy, raving about the food. But don't be too hard on yourself: even for those who've been eating here for years, every visit can feel like a discovery.

Location has a bit to do with it. When you step inside from the gray hubbub of West Twenty-fourth Street and pass through the dark mahogany-panelled bar, the serene simplicity of the dining room comes as a surprise. Yellow stucco walls, decorated with floral wreaths and pottery, glow with light from tabletop candles and from the wood-burning oven, where Tardi roasts everything from calamari and rustic pizzas (the version with sausage and caramelized red onions, served at lunch, is particularly good) to a juicy rack of lamb, which comes accompanied by creamy potato gratin and dandelion greens.

As in Italy, beauty in the surroundings is offset by simplicity at the table. Tardi cooked in the hill town of Montefollonico, and his approach is clearly Tuscan: start with the deep-fried oysters topped with horseradish cream and caviar or the herb-printed *fazzoletto* (which looks like a piece of floral wallpaper made of pasta) over a ragout of spring vegetables. However you choose, two second courses are not to be missed: the heady Ligurian fish stew, served with focaccia croutons and aioli, and the porterhouse steak alla Fiorentina, grilled with olive oil and chunks of red onion. Tardi's experience in Italy shows not just in his culinary skills but also in his dolce-vita casualness. When he's not in the kitchen, he chats with the diners, who are often enticed, perhaps by the warm banana tart or a glass of Nonino amaro, to hang around comparing travel notes with him until closing time. (Open weekdays for lunch and dinner, Saturdays for dinner only. Entrées $16-$58.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—"Way Stations," two projects by Lee Mingwei: "The Dining Project" and "The Letter-Writing Project." For the former, Lee prepares an Asian meal for one museum visitor chosen at random every day (the dinner conversation is quietly replayed at the museum the next day); for the latter, visitors are encouraged to enter booths and write something (insight, forgiveness, and gratitude are the suggested epistolary themes) that they may send or simply leave for later visitors to peruse. Through July 19. . . . ¶ The face-lift for the museum's permanent-collection galleries is now complete, with the expanded quarters providing a new home for key works by Hopper, O'Keeffe, and Calder. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Masters of Color and Light: Homer, Sargent, and the American Watercolor Movement" showcases more than a hundred and fifty works from the museum's extensive collection. Through Aug. 23. . . . ¶ "Jewels of the Romanovs: Treasures of the Russian Imperial Court" presents crown jewels and other baubles, including the most celebrated sapphire in the world (before Kate Winslet's), a 260-carat specimen given by Alexander II to his wife. Through July 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays, 11 to 9; and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

National Academy Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (369-4880)—"Whistler: Impressions of an American Abroad—Etchings and Lithographs from the Carnegie Museum." Through June 28. . . . ¶ "All Things Bright and Beautiful: California Impressionist Paintings from the Irvine Museum." Through July 5. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5, and Friday evenings until 10.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"Particular Voices: Portraits of Gay and Lesbian Writers" presents Robert Giard's photographs of more than a hundred writers: Tony Kushner beside a silk Karl Marx pillow, Allen Ginsberg showing off his own photo of William Burroughs, and many others. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, 22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City. (718-784-2084)—"Alex Katz Under the Stars: American Landscapes 1951-1995." The most telling work in this satisfying retrospective is a series of colored-paper collages from the late fifties: the serene, oddly joyless nautical vignettes point to a world where Hopper—and not Pop art—was the sovereign influence. Katz's landscapes tend to be either small or huge—the best of the latter are the "Superb Lilies #2" (1967), vibrant as a Rosenquist, and a lovely, Sheeler-esque "SoHo Morning" from two decades later. More loosely painted scenes of grass and rushing water reveal nothing more than Katz's deceptively simple house-paint technique; as in his superflat portraits, the surfaces of his landscapes hint at turmoil—or absolute vacuity—within. Through June 21. . . . ¶ "Gordon Matta-Clark: Drawings Retrospective and Re-creation of Historic Projects." Matta-Clark (1943-78) was known for slicing chunks from houses and office buildings. He would have had fun with his retrospective at P.S. 1; his desire to, say, bifurcate the elaborately renovated space would have made for an intriguing institutional dilemma. As it stands, this tribute to the architect-turned-artist is uncommonly thorough and restrained. It presents Matta-Clark's most striking public projects without sensationalizing a man who, like his Earth Art colleague Robert Smithson, died on the cusp of something great. The exhibition includes documentary photographs, notes, and films of works like "Open House (Dumpster)" (1971), a makeshift gallery in a SoHo garbage receptacle, which is also re-created in the museum's outdoor galleries. Most surprising are two rooms full of frenetic "energy forms," colorful nature drawings that add an exuberant note to the Conceptualist glaze Matta-Clark's art has accrued over the years. Through Aug. 30. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Kurt Kren—This exhibition, though not as comprehensive as the current Actionist show at Baron Boisanté (see below), is remarkable for a video compilation of Kren's mesmeriz-

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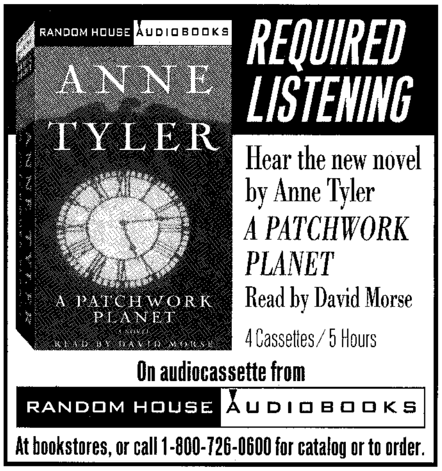

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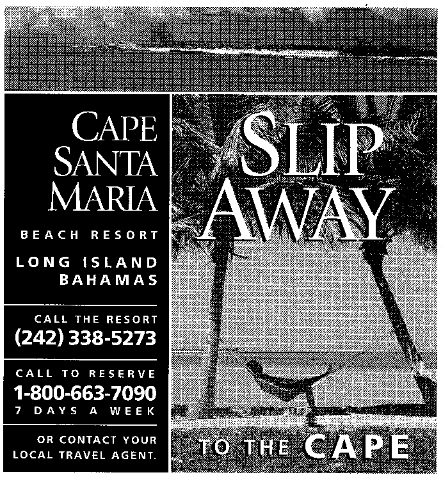

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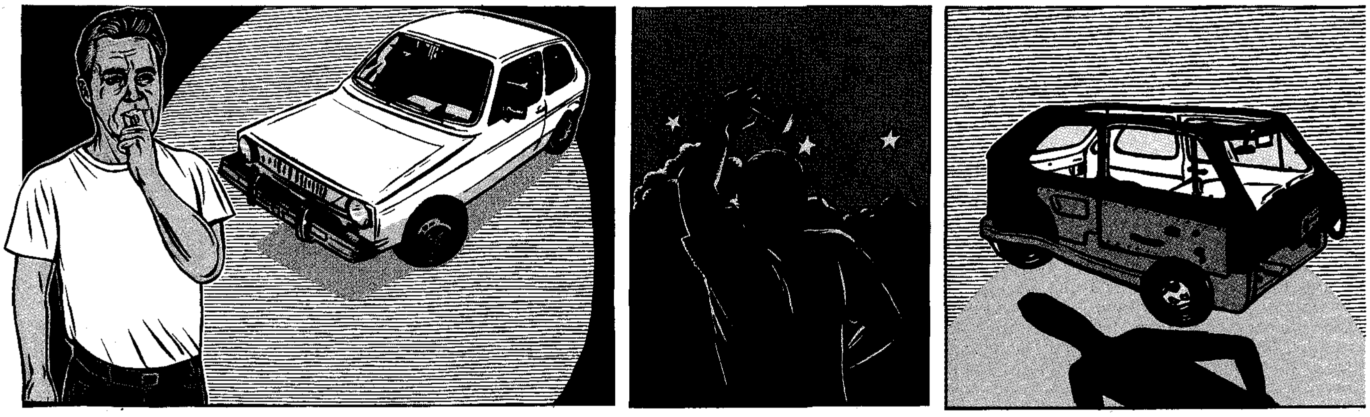
ing (and misogynist) quick-cut films—in particular, his gross "Mama and Papa" (1964), which inspired disciples like Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley. Through June 13. (Gat, 1100 Madison Ave., at 82nd St. 327-0441.)

"Actionism"—Kurt Kren, along with Guenter Brus, Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch, Rudolf Schwarzkogler, and a bevy of anonymous women, comprised the Viennese Actionists, an outlaw collective dedicated to "direct art": orgies of foodstuffs and feces and tentative forays into self-mutilation. The hilarious and sometimes sickening results (captured on film and in photographs) inspired followers from Monty Python to Chris Burden. As a whole, the show is poignant for its clumsy attempts at purging Germanic inhibitions, especially postwar guilt. Through June 13. (Baron Boisanté, 50 W. 57th. 581-9191.)

"Taboo: Repression and Revolt in Modern Art"—A century's worth of bad boys and girls, from Gustav Klimt to Sue Coe. A tighter focus would have helped, but the theme is ambitious, and among the revolutionaries and shock-jocks are some real gems, such as the French photographer Pierre Molinier's ecstatic fetish montages and the pioneering feminist Hannah Wilke's incandescent self-portrait with her mother, who was ravaged by breast cancer. Through May 30. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St. 245-6734.)



Sculptor Dan Devine's "How to Turn Your Car Inside Out," at Pierogi 2000, in Williamsburg.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

Short List—**JOSEF ALBERS,** Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227. Through May 30. . . . **PAUL CADMUS,** DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111. Through June 19. . . . **GORDON COOK,** Schmidt-Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122. Through May 29. . . . **STUART DAVIS** and **GASTON LACHAISE,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Open Mondays; both shows through May 30. . . . **JANE FREILICHER,** DeNagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050. Through May 29. . . . **MARSDEN HARTLEY,** Babcock, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 767-1852. Through June 20. . . . **HOWARD HODGKIN,** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 744-2313. Through June 13. . . . **REBECCA HORN,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 977-7160. Through June 13. . . . **ALFREDO JAAR,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. 315-0470. Through June 13. . . . **PER KIRKEBY,** Werner, 21 E. 67th St. 988-1623. Through May 30. . . . **PAUL KLEE,** Krugier, 41 E. 57th St. 755-7288. Through July 23. . . . **REGINALD MARSH,** ACA Galleries, 41 E. 57th St. 644-8300. Through May 30. . . . **JOAN MITCHELL** and **PATTI SMITH,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454. Both shows through June 5. . . . **ISAMU NOGUCHI,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. Through June 26. . . . **GUY PÈNE DU BOIS,** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 535-5767. Through June 13. . . . **TOM SHANNON,** Yoshii, 20 W. 57th St. 265-8876. Through June 13. . . . **JOAN SNYDER,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810. Through June 12. . . . **NICOLAS DE STAEL,** Cadé, 1045 Madison Ave., at 79th St. 734-3670. Through June 20. . . . **FRANK STELLA,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550. Through June 26. . . . **JOSEPH STELLA,** York, 21 E. 65th St. 772-9155. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through June 30. . . . **ALBERT YORK,** Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. 838-0333. Through June 12.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Polly Apfelbaum—"Ice," a floor piece made of velvet and dye. Nominally sculpture, the work mixes various mediums: painting, assemblage, and traditional handicraft. Within the jumbled corpuscles of color lurks a sense of order that betrays Apfelbaum's formalist roots. Through June 6. (D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460.)

Tom Sachs—In prior shows, this young artist has suggested connections between instruments of violence and chic-label consciousness, e.g., guns and bombs tricked up in the signature styles of Hermès and Prada. This time out, Sachs ups the ante with a full-scale replica of Fat Man, the bomb dropped on Nagasaki—the interior has been jazzed up with a variety of Sony products, and gallerygoers may crane their necks inside to watch "Blade Runner," "Dr. No," etc. In the rear gallery, the artist has built a tower of handcrafted Hello Kitty products, based on items from his own collection. Through June 6. (Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. 243-3753.)

"Three Catholics: Ruscha, Mapplethorpe, Warhol"—The concept sounds a little hokey, but the show is splendid. Heaven, Hell, death, sin, redemption—as well as their crass commercialization—are explored in various mediums by three artists possessed by the shadows of their childhood faith and a sense of irony. Through June 27. (Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.)

Short List—**GHADA AMER,** Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. 741-8695. Through May 20. . . . **LIESBETH BIK AND JOS VAN DER POL,** Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770. Through June 30. . . . **VINCENT BIZIEN,** Au Base, 433 W. 14th St. 414-0563. Through May 30. . . . **OLAFUR ELIASSON,** Bonakdar Jancou, 521 W. 21st St. 414-4144. Through June 4. . . . **MUNRO GALLOWAY,** DeChiara Stewart, 521 W. 26th St. 967-6007. Through June 6. . . . **MICHEL GERARD,** De Folin, 529 W. 20th St. 242-3434. Through June 6. . . . **BETTY GOODWIN,** Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 645-1701. Through May 16. . . . **PAMELA HARRIS,** Kirkland, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930. Through June 6. . . . **ANISH KAPOOR,** Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 206-9300. Through May 22. . . . **ELLSWORTH KELLY,** Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Through June 20. . . . **JANICE KRASNOW,** Martz, 529 W. 20th St. 206-3686. Through May 23. . . . **REE MORTON,** Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 367-7474. Through June 6. . . . **CHARLES OLSON,** Bibro, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7030. Through May 23. . . . **THOMAS TROSCH,** Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555. Through June 19.

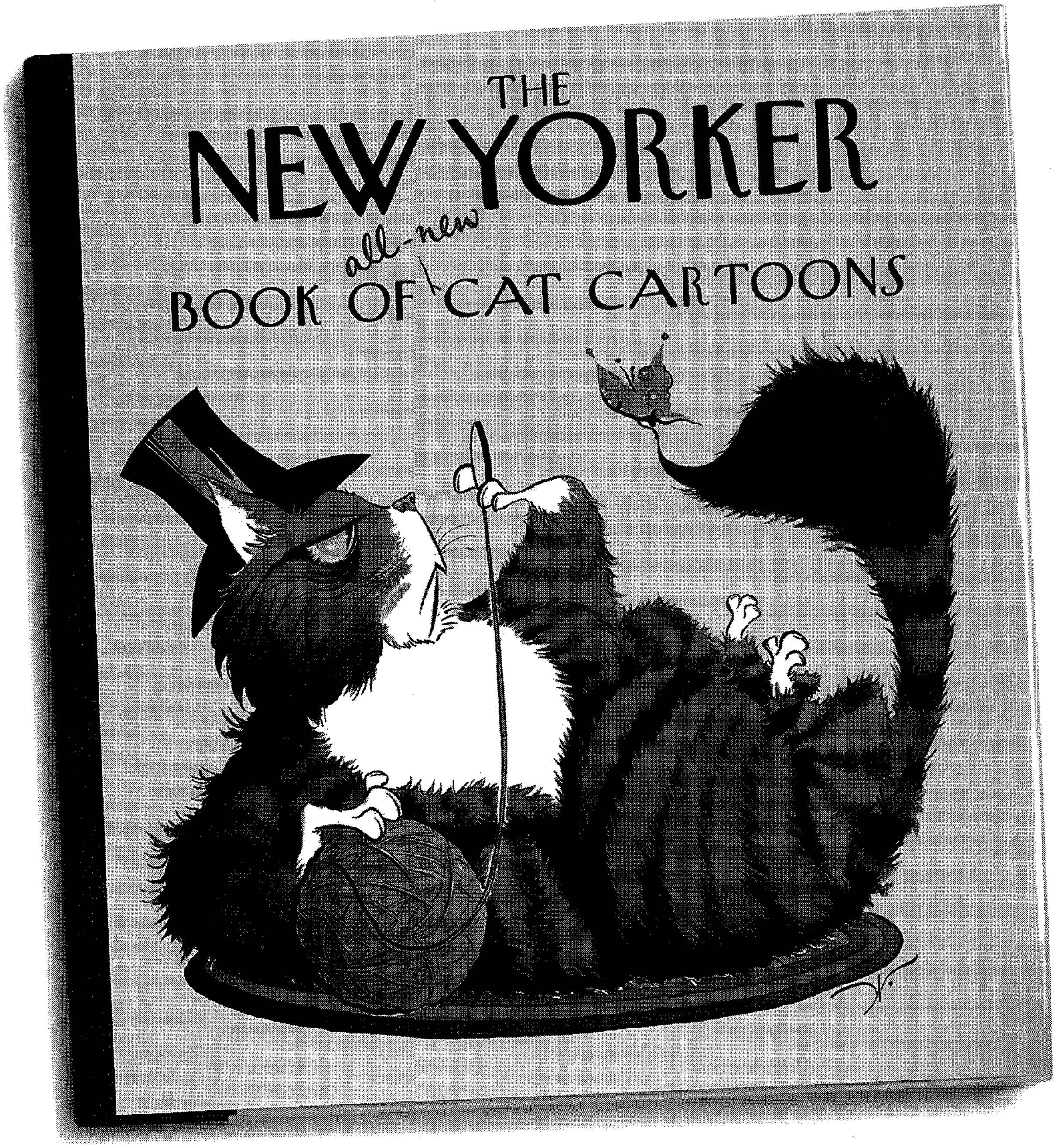
GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Walton Ford—Large watercolors of animals (an Indo-Chinese tiger, a colony of auks) which evoke Audubon, Brueghel, and the Hudson River School, period styles that serve as playing fields for historical ironies: the tiger's stripes hide profiles of Vietnamese rulers, and quotations from Casanova, de Sade, and other Enlightenment figures surround the birds—a reference to the era's luxurious auk-feather beds. Through May 23. (Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219.)

Catherine Murphy—Meticulously rendered oils of solidly familiar subjects (a plastic wading pool, a brooch, a ladder on gravel, a couple of bags of trash) that nevertheless achieve a jarring effect, as if someone snapped a flashbulb at something you had been staring at distractedly. Through May 22. (Lennon, Weinberg, 560 Broadway. 941-0012.)

"Shadows of a Hand: The Drawings of Victor Hugo"—The French literary lion called his ink sketches "these things that amuse me between two verses"; at more than four thousand drawings, that's a lot of verse. Hugo's washy, atmospheric works prefigure abstract art, from Rorschach to Rothko, and "Ruined Aqueduct," from 1850, is moodily precise, hinting at both Whistler and Hopper. A surprising, even inspiring, début/retrospective. Through June 13. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166.)

Short List—**CHANTAL AKERMAN,** Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405. Through June 13. . . . **MEL BOCHNER,** Markey, 55 Vandam St. 627-4446. Through June 6. . . . **REG BUTLER,** Kent, 67 Prince St. 966-4500. Through June 20. . . . **LISA CORINNE DAVIS,** June Kelly, 591 Broadway. 226-1660. Through May 30. . . . **ROBERT HECKES,** Postmasters, 80 Greene St. 941-5711. Through May 30. . . . **ROBERT IRWIN,** Pace Wildenstein, 142 Greene St. 431-9224. Through June 19. . . . **WOLFGANG LAIB,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. 431-3685. Through June 6. . . . **GEORGE LAPPAS,** Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753. Through May 23. . . . **ANNETTE MEYER,** StoreFront for Art and Architecture, 97 Kenmare St. 431-5795. Through June 13. . . . **PAUL MC CARTHY,** Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St. 219-9600. Through May 22. . . . **SAM MESSER,** Beitzel, 102 Prince St. 219-2863. Through June 13. . . . **YOKO ONO, MICHELLE LOPEZ,** and **CECILY BROWN,** Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300. All shows through May 30. . . . **IZHAR PATKIN,** Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St. 941-5777. Through June 13. . . . **LUCIEN REES ROBERTS,** Davies, 23 Commerce St. 243-6840. Through May 30. . . . **JAUNE QUICK-TO-SEE SMITH,** Steinbaum Krauss, 132 Greene St. 431-4224. Through May 30. . . . **JESSICA STOCKHOLDER,** Senior, 375 West Broadway. 941-0960. Through June 6. . . . **BRIAN TOLLE,** Basilico Fine Arts, 26 Wooster St. 966-1831. Through June 6. . . . **ROBERT YARBER,** Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway. 966-6160. Through May 30.



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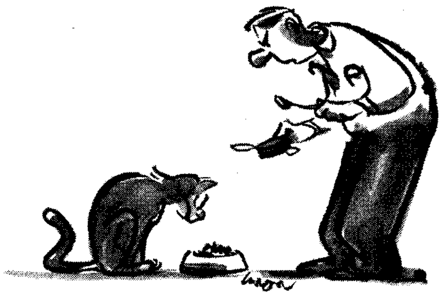

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GALLERIES—OTHER VENUES

Dan Devine—A '79 VW Rabbit, cut up and reassembled with the interior facing out and the hood, doors, and trunk scrunched inside. The sculptor explains the procedure in a set of hilarious instructions, "How to Turn Your Car Inside Out," available at the gallery ("Be sure to have a pile of clean rags at your disposal" and, later, "Now that you have cut your car into pieces carefully lay them out in a large open space with room for walking in between"). The work recalls any number of literal sculptors, both comic and grandiose (Matta-Clark, Christo), without losing sight of homelier anxieties, like parallel parking. Through May 25. (Pierogi 2000, 167 N. 9th St., Brooklyn. 718-599-2144.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Sotheby's—May 13-14: Impressionist and modern art works, including paintings by Monet, Degas, and Léger; also on May 13, a sale of the Thyssen Meissonnier tureen, a silver piece executed between 1735 and 1740. . . . ¶ May 14-15: Contemporary art, including Lucian Freud's "Large Interior, W11 (After Watteau)" and Warhol's 1964 silk-screen painting "Orange Marilyn." . . . ¶ May 19: Native American art. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

Christie's—The conclusion of a sale of twentieth-century art. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000. May 13.) . . . At **christie's east:** Books and manuscripts from Napoleon's library, and other materials relating to military life. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400. May 19.)

Phillips—A sale of natural-history curiosities, including a forty-to-fifty-million-year-old turtle-skeleton fossil, some fifty meteorites, and a group of five blood-engorged mosquitoes encased in Dominican amber. (406 E. 79th St. 570-4830. May 17.)

Doyle—May 13: English and Continental furniture and decorative pieces. . . . ¶ May 18: Native American art, including a large collection of Plains Indian pieces. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

Swann—Prints, drawings, and other works on paper. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710. May 14.)

International Fine Art Fair—The concluding day of the show. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. May 13. For information, call 642-8572.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Tina Barney—Recent large-scale color portraits by a master chronicler of familial postures. There's less interior space here than in Barney's well-known tableaux, and the intensified focus serves her well: the defiant, monumental "Jill and I" glows brightly and nearly jumps off the wall. Through May 16. (Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166.)

Sally Gall—New, evocative work by the landscape photographer, made during a stay at an artist's colony in the Grenadines. Through May 22. (Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747.)

Marion Post Wolcott (1910-90) / **Sebastião Salgado**—"The FSA Years, 1939-41," a selection of three dozen photographs, among them images of Tennessee cotton sharecroppers, Mississippi juke joints, and a West Virginia coal miner's daughter carrying a can of kerosene, her contorted body walking away up a long, hard road. / Five photographs taken among the landless peasants of rural Brazil by the well-known photojournalist. Both shows through May 23. (Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.)

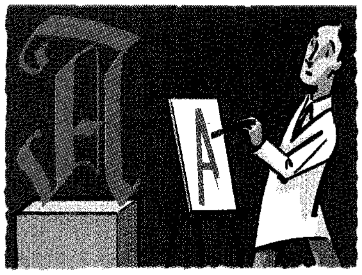
"Inventors + Alchemists"—A group show of contemporary tintypes, photographs, and other objects. Through June 14. (Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767.)

"Motherhood"—An offbeat illustration of the matriarchal mind-set, by such artists as Gertrude Käsebier, Clarence White, Marvin E. Newman, Gordon Coster, Grancel Fitz, and Esther Bubley. Through June 6. (De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Born-Again Classics

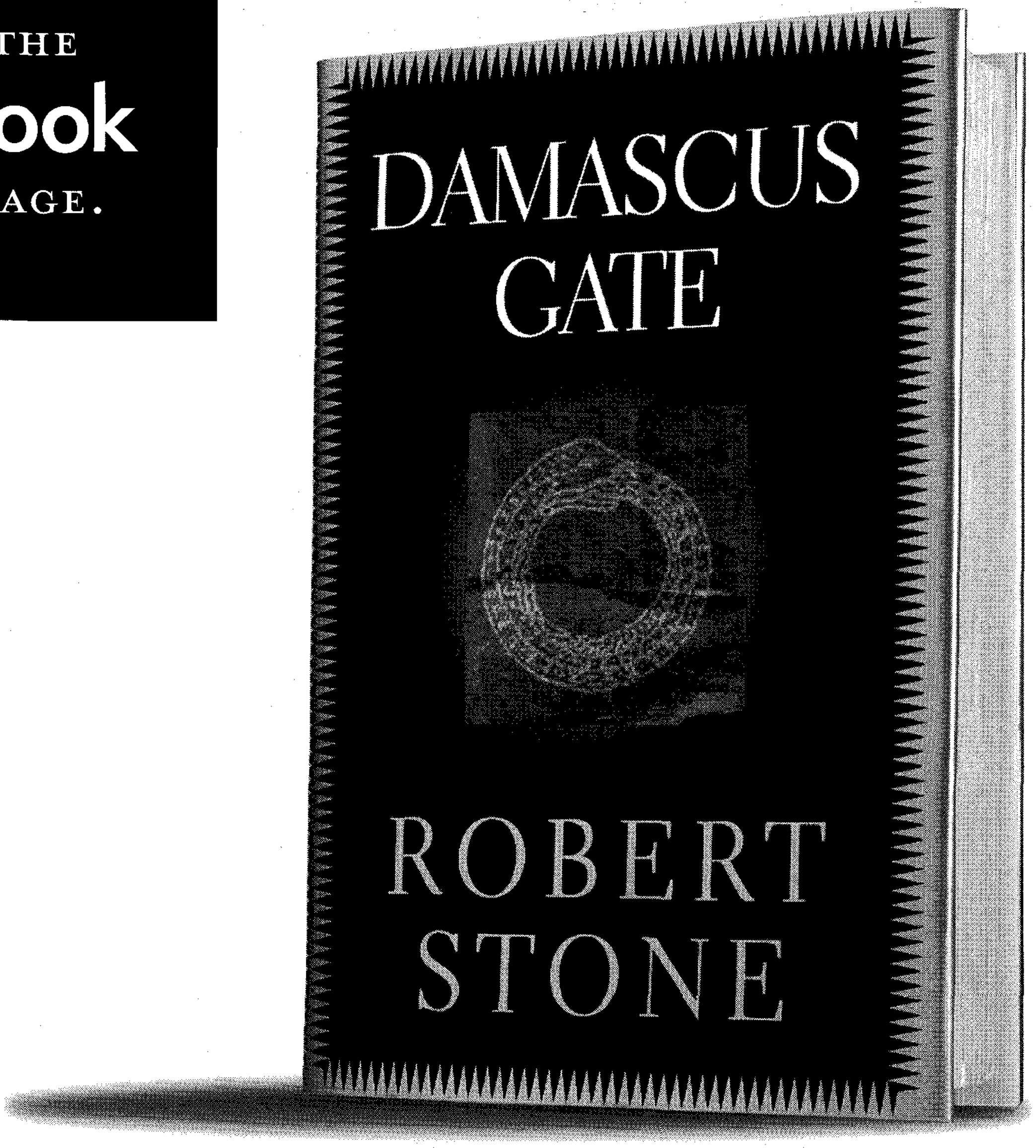
Once upon a time, anyone incautious enough to tell a snobbish literary friend that he was reading a classic work of European literature in translation might have expected to be humiliated with the response "Oh, but you simply *must* read it in the original." But translations are no longer merely the recourse of the linguistically challenged. More than ever, publishers are making a thriving industry out of new, high-quality translations of great works. John E. Woods is revising our impression of Thomas Mann, masterpiece by masterpiece: **Doctor Faustus** (Knopf) is the latest of his undertakings, following his acclaimed translations of **Buddenbrooks** and **The Magic Mountain** (both Vintage). Woods has a competitor in Joachim Neugröschel, whose translation of **Death in Venice**, along with a selection of Mann's other short fiction, comes out in July from Viking.

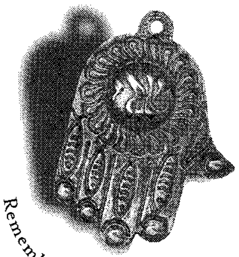

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Mark Harman's new translation of Kafka's **The Castle** initiates a project by Schocken Books to restore a great, mistranslated writer to his true, idiosyncratic self. Another individualist, Mikhail Bulgakov, who saw his phantasmagoric satires banned under Stalin, would doubtless be pleased to know that three translations of his great novel **The Master and Margarita** are currently available.

Undaunted by Robert Frost's dictum that "poetry is what is lost in translation," Elio Zappulla has written a new verse translation of Dante's **Inferno** (Pantheon), which joins a host of other recent English-language versions of the hellish epic. Raymond P. Scheindlin has just published a translation of **The Book of Job** (Norton), aimed at drawing attention to the poetic qualities of the Biblical story. Meanwhile, the University of Pennsylvania Press has announced a two-year project to publish the corpus of classical Greek drama in translations by an impressive array of contemporary poets. It may not be long before anyone who mentions that he is reading Sophocles in Greek can expect to be told, "Oh, but you simply *must* read it in translation."

THE Book PAGE.





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That it's Jeusalem.
What happens here is unlike
what happens elsewhere.
Sometimes it changes the world.
-Robert Stone, *Damascus Gate*

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International Center of Photography—"Micha Bar-Am: An Israeli Photobiography." Through May 31. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown—"Robert Capa: Photographs," a retrospective of the war correspondent's career. Through June 7. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

"Metropolitan Opera Bar," by Garry Winogrand, at MOMA.

Short List—**ed burtynsky** and **lois conner,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220. Both shows through May 30. . . . **jed fielding,** Alan Klotz/Photocollect, 22 E. 72nd St. 327-2211. Closed Tuesdays; through May 23. . . . **rena bass forman,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through May 30. . . . **rudy giuliani,** Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon; through June 13. . . . **emmet gowin,** Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Through June 13. . . . **david malin,** Schickler, 560 Broadway. 431-6363. Through June 20. . . . **arno rafael minkkinen** and **lynn stern,** Friedman, 32 E. 67th St. 794-8950. Both shows through June 19. . . . **michael prince,** Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through June 13. . . . **eugene richards,** Kasher, 54 North Moore St. 966-3978. Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6; through May 30. . . . **walter rosenblum,** Queens College, Kissena Blvd. and Melbourne Ave., Flushing. 718-997-4747. Open Mondays through Thursdays, 11 to 7; through May 28. . . . **gerald slota,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through May 23. . . . **antonio turok,** Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. 505-5555. Through June 21. . . . **jo ann verburg,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through June 27. . . . **dan weiner,** Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. Through June 13. . . . **bob willoughby,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223. Through May 23.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, and the New York Public Library.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Avery Fisher Hall is 875-5030, and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 501-3330.)

OPERA

"Esther"—The music of Handel's oratorio is joined to the verses of Racine's tragedy to yield a new version by Millennial Arts Productions which includes drama and dance. (Angel Orensanz Foundation Center for the Arts, 172 Norfolk St. May 13 and May 15 at 8 and May 16 at 2. For information about tickets, call 307-4100.)

Amato Opera Company—Final performances of "Tosca." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. May 15-16 at 7:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall, James Conlon conducting. May 14 at 8 and May 15 at 2: Zemlinsky's lyrical symphony "Die Seejungfrau" (an orchestral interpretation of Hans Christian Andersen's well-known mermaid tale), Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 1 (with Garrick Ohlsson), and Liszt's symphonic poem "Les Préludes." . . . ¶ May 19 at 6:45: An intermissionless concert of the Rachmaninoff and Liszt works above, for the after-work crowd.

St. Bartholomew's Church Choir and Orchestra of the Old Fairfield Academy—William Trafka directs Handel's four "Coronation" Anthems (written for the coronation of George II, in 1727) and Bach's Magnificat. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. 378-0248. May 13 at 7:30.)

American Symphony Orchestra—No one influenced musical composition in America in this century more than the French pedagogue Nadia Boulanger, whose classes at the American Conservatory in Fontainebleau and her studio on the Rue Ballu in Paris became obligatory stops for aspiring American composers, from the nineteen-twenties to the eighties. Boulanger, who died in 1979, was that ideal teacher who somehow coaxed a personal voice out of her pupils—among them Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, Ned Rorem, and Philip Glass. In this concert, Leon Botstein leads two works by her beloved sister, Lili Boulanger, as well as pieces by three of her students: Easley Blackwood's Symphony No. 1, Copland's Orchestral Variations (his own 1957 reworking of his 1930 Piano Variations), and Igor Markevich's ballet suite "Rebus." (Avery Fisher Hall. May 13 at 8.)

Manhattan School of Music Chamber Sinfonia—Glen Barton Cortese conducts Brahms's "Academic Festival Overture," the première of Meyer Kupferman's Concerto for Four Guitars and Orchestra (featuring the conservatory's guitar faculty—David Starobin, David Leisner, Oren Fader, and Mark Delpriora), Ponce's "Concierto del Sur" (with guitarist Jorge Caballero), and Mozart's E-Flat-Major Sinfonia Concertante (K. 364, with the husband-and-wife faculty members Glenn Dicterow, playing violin, and Karen Dreyfus, on viola). (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. 749-2802, ext. 428. May 15 at 8.)

Dessoff Choirs—Performing Rachmaninoff's "Liturgy of St. John Chrysostum," with Kent Tritle directing. (Church of St. Paul the Apostle, Ninth Ave. at 60th St. May 15 at 8. For information about tickets, call 935-2551.)

I Cantori di New York—Mark Shapiro leads Baldassare Galuppi's Magnificat, Dominick Argento's "A Toccata of Galuppi's," and works by Matthew Harris and Stuart Greenbaum (a première). (Calvary Episcopal Church, Park Ave. S. at 21st St. May 16 at 8. For information about tickets, call 439-4758.)

New York Chamber Symphony—Martin Turnovsky conducts Dvořák's Serenade for Winds, Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No 1 (featuring Ignat Solzhenitsyn, and with Neil Balm playing the highlighted trumpet part), and Mozart's C-Major Missa Brevis (K. 220, with the New York Chamber Symphony Chorus) and Symphony No. 36. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. May 16 at 8 and May 17 at 5.)

City Island Baroque Ensemble—Amadi Hummings is featured in viola concertos by Telemann and Franz Anton Hoffmeister, and Maria Kitsopoulos is the soloist in C. P. E. Bach's Cello Concerto in A Minor. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. May 17 at noon.)

New York Youth Symphony—The orchestra's thirty-fifth season ends with Mischa Santora conducting Rimsky-Korsakov's "Russian Easter Overture," the première of Peter Boyer's "The Phoenix," and Strauss's French Horn Concerto No. 1 (with David Jolley) and his symphonic poem "Death and Transfiguration." (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. May 17 at 2.)

Canticum Novum Singers—The choir is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary by performing various Bach cantatas. In this doubleheader concert, Harold Rosenbaum directs eleven of them, with soloists Beverly Hoch and Robert Crowe (sopranos), Jeffrey Gall (countertenor), Mark Bleeke and Todd Teske (tenors), and David Arnold (baritone). May 17 at 3: The Cantatas No. 12, No. 23, No. 51, No. 67, and No. 150. . . . ¶ At 8: The Cantatas No. 56, No. 68, No. 78, No. 118, No. 122, and No. 140. (Merkin Concert Hall. Separate tickets are required for the two performances.)

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra—At Avery Fisher Hall, Simon Rattle conducting. In the era of jet-setting conductors, Rattle has ridden a rather unusual path to superstardom: in 1980, at the age of twenty-five, he settled in as principal conductor of an obscure orchestra in England's West Midlands, staying put long enough to build it into a widely recorded, world-touring ensemble playing in one of the best new halls in Europe. At the same time, he grew increasingly in demand as a guest conductor, such that when he finally breaks away from Birmingham, this fall, the musical world will be his oyster. He brings his orchestra to town with two programs. May 17 at 3: A Suite from Rameau's "Les Boréades," Haydn's Symphony No. 86, and Beethoven's Symphony No. 3. . . . ¶ May 18 at 7:30: Oliver Knussen's Symphony No. 3 and Mahler's Symphony No. 7.

Voices of Ascension—Dennis Keene directs works composed for the Jewish liturgy, including Ernest Bloch's "Sacred Service." (Church of the Ascension, Fifth Ave. at 10th St. 254-8553. May 18 at 8.)

RECITALS

Chamber Players of the League/I.S.C.M.—The modern-music ensemble performs works by Jason Eckhardt, Louis Karchin, Mikel Kuehn, Martin Boykan, and Margaret Brouwer. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 13 at 8.)

Olli Mustonen—The young Finnish pianist concludes his series at Alice Tully Hall in which he and several colleagues explore how Shostakovich was inspired by the music of Bach. May 13 at 8: Violinist Pekka Kuusisto joins him to perform Bach's A-Major and G-Major Violin Sonatas and a transcription of his B-Minor Flute Sonata, as well as Shostakovich's Violin Sonata. . . . ¶ May 17 at 2: Violinist Joshua Bell and cellist Steven Isserlis assist in a concert comprising Bach's D-Major Viola da Gamba Sonata, Unaccompanied Cello Suite No. 3, and C-Minor Violin Sonata, as well as Shostakovich's E-Minor Piano Trio. (875-5050.)

St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble—The group's brass players offer works by Gabrieli, Schein (his "Battle Suite"), Susato (a suite of Renaissance dances), and Bach (the Ricercar from "A Musical Offering"). (Temple Emanu-el, Fifth Ave. at 65th St. May 14 at 6:30. No tickets necessary.)

Bargemusic—Violist Paul Neubauer and pianist Jeffrey Swann perform Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata; cellist Ronald Thomas joins them for Brahms's A-Minor Trio (Op. 114, for which the composer allowed that viola could be substituted for clarinet in performance); and violinist Kerry McDermott rounds out the ensemble for Fauré's C-Minor Piano Quartet. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. May 14 at 7:30 and May 17 at 2.)

New York Festival of Song—A decade has passed since this loosely knit consortium of singers began pumping new life into the New York recital scene through a combination of imaginative programming and an unmannered style of presentation. In this far-ranging tenth-anniversary concert, Michael Barrett and Steven Blier, the group's founders and hardworking pianists, are joined by singers who have graced their concerts over the years, including sopranos Harolyn Blackwell, Amy Burton, Sylvia McNair, and Roberta Peters; mezzo-sopranos Stephanie Blythe, Susan Graham, and Joan Morris (the last joined by her husband, the composer and pianist William Bolcom); tenors Peter Kazaras, Stanford Olsen, and Steven Tharp; and baritones Philip Cutlip, Kurt Ollmann, and William Sharp. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. May 14 at 8.)

Concert Royal—Harpsichordist James Richman and colleagues perform Rameau's five "Pièces de Clavecin en Concerts." (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6100. May 14 at 8.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—The organization's "Music of Our Time" series comprises three concerts at Merkin Concert Hall. May 14 at 8: Works by Michael Nathaniel Hersch, Scott Wheeler, David Horne, Melinda Wagner, and Pierre Jalbert. . . . ¶ May 16 at 9: Fred Sherry and Steven Mackey perform pieces for cello and electric guitar. . . . ¶ May 19 at 8: Ezra Laderman's Duo for Flute and Clarinet, Henri Lazaroff's String Quintet, and works commissioned by the Society from Stephen Hartke and Judith Weir.

Anonymous 4 and Lionheart—The women's vocal quartet teams up with the male sextet to perform works by Johannes Ockeghem (1410-97), including his "Mi Mi" Mass and sections from his Requiem. (St. Michael's Church, Amsterdam Ave. at 99th St. 678-5432. May 15 at 8.)

Reiko Uchida—Pianist, performing Mozart's Sonata in B-Flat Major (K. 570) and several works by Chopin. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. May 17 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Christine Schäfer—In her New York début recital, the soprano performs songs by Mozart, Strauss, Weill, and others. Pianist Warren Jones assists. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. May 18 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

Amadi Hummings and Ilan Rechtman—The violist and the pianist perform Schumann's "Märchenerzählungen" and Brahms's F-Minor Sonata, among other works. (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. May 18 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Pop Quiz—Michael Feldman, the Will Rogers of Wisconsin, who has been dubbed "The King of Small Talk Radio" by the Museum of Television and Radio, brings his broadband wit to Town Hall for a live broadcast of his show, "Whad' Ya Know?" His guests are *Times* restaurant critic Ruth Reichl and comedian Eddie Izzard. (May 16 at 10:30 A.M. 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824.)

A Moveable Feast—The Ninth Avenue International Food Festival celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary by turning the blocks between 37th and 57th Streets into a sidewalk smorgasbord. Neighborhood merchants at three hundred booths will be hawking everything from pasta and Greek cheese pies to French breads, Spanish empanadas, and Irish roast pigs. (May 16-17, from 11 to 7. For more information, call 581-7217.)

Readings—May 13 at 7:30: By Robert Stone, from his novel "Damascus Gate." (Barnes & Noble, 33 E. 17th St. No tickets necessary.) . . ¶ May 17 at 2: By actors Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, from the works of James Baldwin. (Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S. For reservations, which are required, call 360-1378.) . . . ¶ May 18 at 8: By poet Charles Wright, who will be introduced by John Ashbery. (Stella Adler Conservatory, 419 Lafayette St. 260-0525.) . . . ¶ May 19 at 7: By Linda Asher, from her translation of Milan Kundera's novel "Identity," and John Shepley, from his translation of Mario Rigoni Stern's novel "The Story of Tönle." (Borders Books, Park Ave. at 57th St. No tickets necessary.)

Talk—May 19 at 6:30: Jewish Museum curator Norman L. Kleeblatt and New York University art-history professor Linda Nochlin anatomize the painter Chaim Soutine, whose obsession with raw flesh led him to preserve a decaying side of beef with fresh blood. (Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. 423-3224.)

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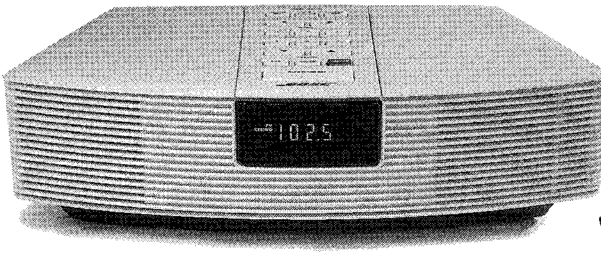

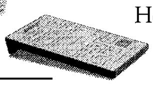

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THE MOVIES

OPENINGS

Bulworth—Warren Beatty, who directed and co-wrote the film (with Jeremy Pikser), stars as a United States senator who has a nervous breakdown and speaks out against big business and shady politicians. Opening May 15. (Ziegfeld.)

The Hanging Garden—A drama about a young man (Chris Leavins) who returns home after having been away for ten years to find that nothing has changed, except himself, in this début film from writer-director Thom Fitzgerald. Opening May 15. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Horse Whisperer—Robert Redford (who also directed) and Kristin Scott Thomas star in this romantic drama based on Nicholas Evans's best-selling novel. Opening May 15. (Guild.)

Lawn Dogs—John Duigan's tale of the friendship between a ten-year-old girl and a twenty-one-year-old boy. Opening May 15.

Life of Jesus—Northern France is the setting for Bruno Dumont's tale of an unemployed twenty-year-old (David Douche) and his friends. In French. Opening May 15. (Cinema Village.)

Quest for Camelot—An animated musical look at King Arthur and his circle. Directed by Frederik Du Chau, with music by David Foster, Carole Bayer Sager, and Patrick Doyle. Opening May 15. (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

After Hours (1985)—The camera, in this lively and companionable film by Martin Scorsese, scoots around making elegant, crisp, and flashy jokes, with perky zooms and cute little dissolves. Scorsese uses his skills like a hired hand, making a vacuous, polished piece of consumer goods—all surface. Griffin Dunne plays a young word-processor operator in midtown New York, who goes down to SoHo for a date and finds himself trapped in a nightmare world, where he has to contend with one flaky, threatening woman after another: Rosanna Arquette, Linda Fiorentino, Teri Garr, Catherine O'Hara, and Verna Bloom. The cast includes John Heard, who gives the movie its only rooted moments, and Cheech and Chong.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum 2; May 15-16.)

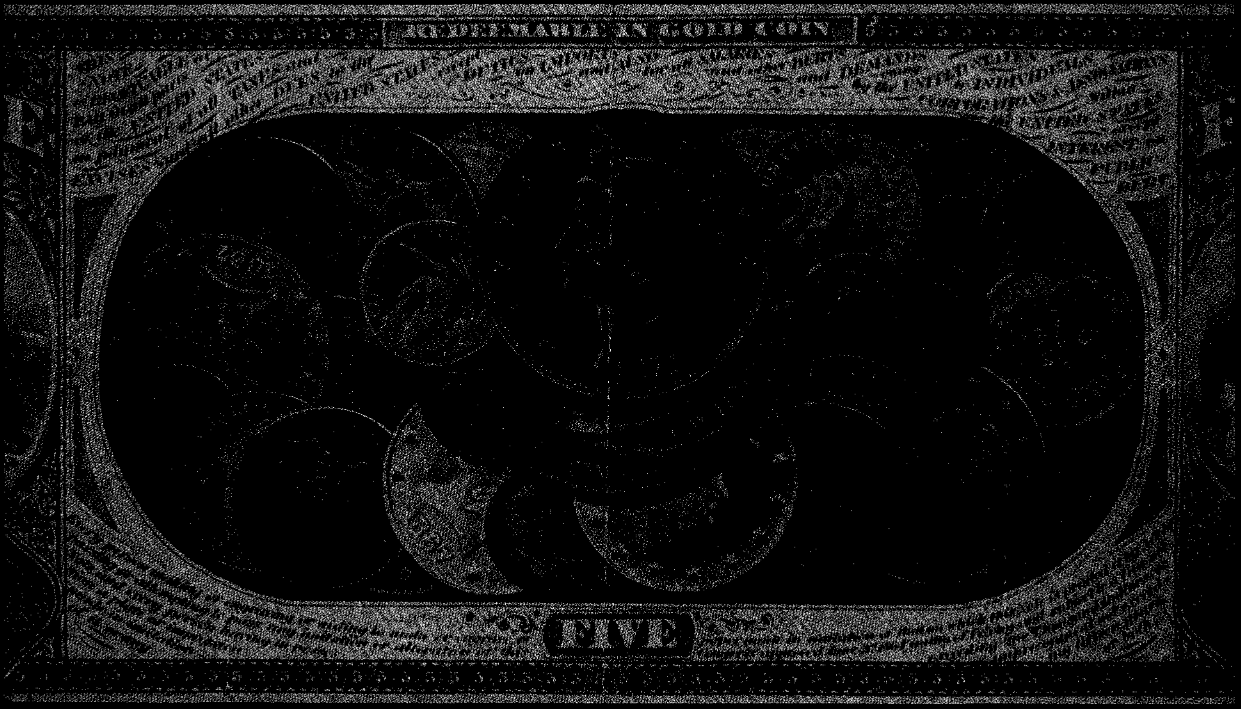
The Butcher Boy—Neil Jordan's daring new film, adapted from the novel by Patrick McCabe, moves with a nervous energy that suggests the vivid, well-populated imagination of twelve-year-old Francie Brady (Eamonn Owens). The film is set in a bleak Northern Irish town in the early sixties. Francie's father (Stephen Rea) is a drunkard, and his mother (Aisling O'Sullivan) is a fragile creature who takes "tablets" in order to cope. Francie's growing outrage is focussed on Mrs. Nugent (Fiona Shaw), the town snob, who personifies all the unfairness and cruelty of his life. Owens, with his thatch of red hair and shining eyes, makes Francie's boyish zest as real as his pain, and Shaw plays his nemesis with great subtlety—a woman lost in her own disdain.—*Daphne Merkin* (4/6/98) (Angelika Film Center, Beekman, and Lincoln Square.)

The Cameraman (1928)—It's a romantic charmer—the exhilarating first product of Buster Keaton's ultimately calamitous turn from independent production to studio work at M-G-M. Keaton plays a lowly tintype photographer who transforms himself into a newsreel ace to win over the office girl at the studio's New York newsreel department. Keaton proves his genius at creating a parabola-like farce with what looks like a series of straight lines, whether he's racing crosstown to face his true love before she realizes that he's off the phone or keeping his tripod level during a tong war by evening it out with flying bullets. Under the direction of his old vaudeville buddy Edward M. Sedgwick, Jr., Keaton gets marvellous support from a cast that includes Marceline Day (the girl), Edward Brophy (a man in a cramped changing stall), and Josephine (an amazing performing monkey).—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum 2; May 18.)

Character—Winner of the Academy Award for best foreign film, this grimly absorbing tale of a father and son engaged in murderous conflict has the look of a Rembrandt, full of chiaroscuro and silvery-brown hues. The film, set in Rotterdam in the twenties, brilliantly evokes a confined, class-ridden society ruled by smug burghers as well as the nooselike feel of fate closing in. Katadreuffe (Fedja van Huet) is the illegitimate son of a silent, hardworking mother (Betty Schuurman) and the despised town bailiff (Jan Decleir) she has refused to marry. Katadreuffe's intense ambition enables him to rise in a prestigious law firm, despite a lack of education and money, but everywhere he turns he comes up against the shadow of his father, who seems to have passed on to him his own driven but isolated character. A fascinatingly layered meditation on the limits of free will, the film moves at a Dickensian pace, amassing the weight of its particular world and gaining power as it goes along. Decleir, with his fishy blue eyes, is remarkable as the hateful but finally poignant ur-father. Directed by Mike van Diem. In Dutch.—*D.M.* (5/11/98) (62nd & Broadway.)

Chinese Box—Wayne Wang's elegant, sorrowful valentine to his native city of Hong Kong, set in the period just before the Crown Colony was to revert to Chinese control. The film stars Jeremy Irons as a British expatriate journalist and Gong Li as the gravely beautiful, elusive woman he loves. After the journalist is diagnosed with a fatal illness, he quits his job and, with a photojournalist friend (Ruben Blades), wanders the underside of Hong Kong—the brothels, the betting parlors, and the markets where animals are slaughtered—with his video camera. The film is extraordinary to look at for its ingenious mixture of visual styles, and it will speak to anyone who has ever tried to take possession of a place in the hope of taking possession of himself. In English and Cantonese. —*D.M.* (4/20/98) (Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

City of Angels—In this slick, good-looking adaptation of Wim Wenders' "Wings of Desire," Meg Ryan, America's favorite child-woman, plays Maggie Rice, a heart surgeon who opens her baby blues wide and cries a lot, and Nicolas Cage is Seth, an angel with an unblinking stare who falls in love with her. Angels, according to this movie's nonexistent logic, travel at the speed of thought and are invisible except to other angels (all of whom are dressed in fashionable black dusters), children, and the dying. But Seth makes himself visible to Maggie, lends her his favorite novel ("A Moveable Feast"), and engages her in deep metaphysical conversation. ("How do you explain," he asks her, "the enduring myth of heaven?") Seth eventually makes the radical decision to become human, and he



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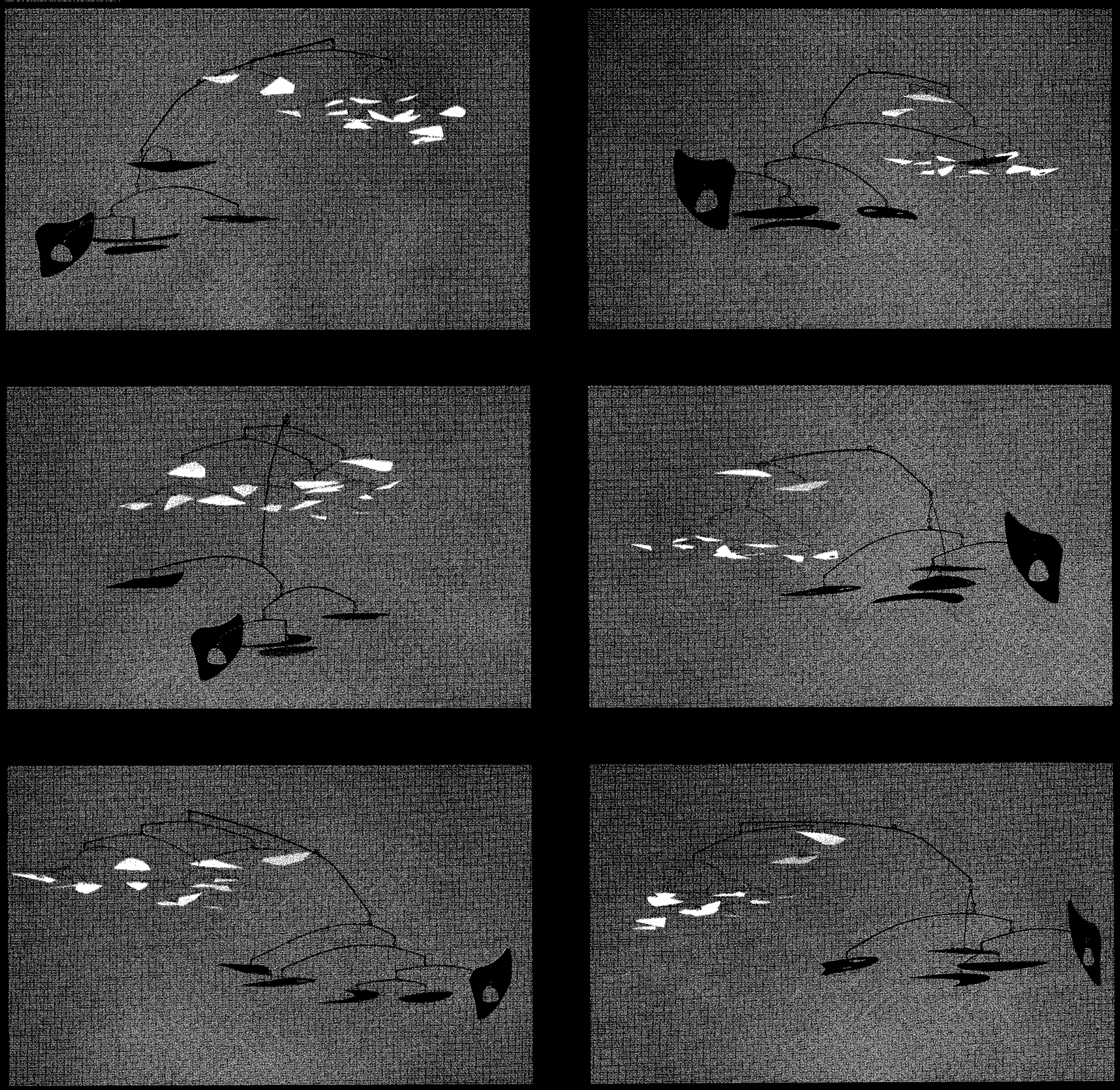

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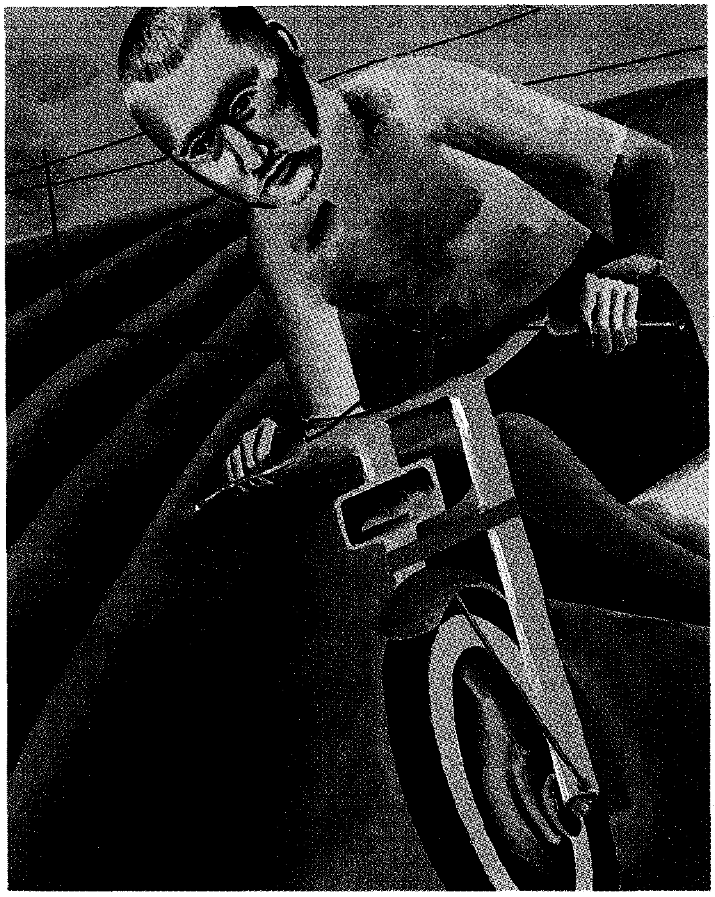
and Maggie have a romantic time of it in her uncle's glamorous little cottage on Lake Tahoe. But, sure enough, tragedy beckons, the better for Seth to announce in doomed-lover style, "I would rather have had one breath of her hair, one kiss of her mouth, one touch of her hand—than an eternity without it." We believe him, 'cause he's that kind of transported guy and Meg Ryan, with her tousled yellow hair, curvy smile, and prepubescent bod, is that kind of inspiring girl.—*D.M.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, State, and Village Theatre VII.)



Opening May 15, David Douche in Bruno Dumont's "Life of Jesus."

ALAIN PILON

Deep Impact—Mimi Leder directed this action thriller about the possible collision between a comet and Earth. With Robert Duvall, Téa Leoni, Elijah Wood, Vanessa Redgrave, Maximilian Schell, and Morgan Freeman. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Astor Plaza, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Waverly.)

Fireworks—The seventh and most sombre work from the cultish Japanese director Takeshi Kitano. In the new film, which he also wrote and co-edited, Kitano plays Nishi, a policeman on the slide. Some colleagues were shot on duty, and, rightly or wrongly, Nishi takes the blame. Meanwhile, his wife is dying, so he takes her away for a country vacation, which he finances by robbing a bank; despite all the cops and gangsters on their trail, the two of them enjoy a last, almost wordless idyll. No one but Kitano would have thought to combine cold spasms of violence with such a tender portrait of marriage. In Japanese.—*Anthony Lane* (3/30/98) (Film Forum.)

A Friend of the Deceased—An engagingly laconic film about life in the new, Ronald Lauderized Ukraine. A despondent translator (Alexandre Lazarev) hires a contract killer to put a hit on himself—and then has a change of heart. The film, lovingly shot by Vilen Kaluta ("Burnt by the Sun"), abounds in photogenic tristesse—it's as though a Camus character wandered into a super-capitalist culture where everything depends on the price of oranges. The story's theme is the disappearance of friendship into the "glorious Soviet past," and its replacement by business relationships, but the real pleasure comes from small educational details, such as the revelation that Earl Grey tea is in high demand in the Ukraine, along with Pampers. In Russian.—*D.M.* (5/11/98) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Go Now—Robert Carlyle stars in this surprisingly unsentimental tale about a young construction worker with multiple sclerosis and the effect his condition has on the people who love him. There's more black humor than you might expect in the low-key script, and the director, Michael Winterbottom, keeps the scenes crisp and engaging. Carlyle's performance is so sexy and quietly moving that the film has an intimacy rarely seen in illness dramas; there's no noble suffering here, just a courageous attempt to get on with things.—*Bruce Diones* (Regency.)

He Got Game—Spike Lee offers up more cliché-ridden street angst in this drama about a high-school basketball star (Milwaukee Bucks guard Ray Allen) who feels the pressure of the college draft while dealing with his anger toward his father (Denzel Washington), a convicted murderer. The film is gorgeously shot (slow-motion basketballs spin in the air like Kubrick's spaceships), and the majestic Aaron Copland score helps some of the images to soar, but Lee's screenplay, heavy-handed and didactic, gives the actors little room to convey any real emotions.—*B.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, Embassy 2, Embassy 3, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas.)

Mon Oncle (1958)—One often appreciates what Jacques Tati is trying to do more than what he actually brings off. His target is the depersonalization of modern life—not so much the mechanization that René Clair satirized in "À Nous la Liberté" and Chaplin in "Modern Times" but the sterile, tasteless tedium that modern hygienic design has produced. There are genuinely inventive moments: the little boys gambling on whether passersby will fall into their lamppost trap; the old man directing a chauffeur who is trying to park an inordinately long car; the wonderful use of the modern functional house as a cartooned face, so that heads at the circular windows become eyes looking out. But the moments are intermittent, and a fundamental miscasting confuses the issue: shouldn't the unemotional, gawky, butterfingered Tati be playing the plastics manufacturer rather than the warm, friendly uncle? With Jean-Pierre Zola, Lucien Frégis, and Alain Bécourt. In French.—*P.K.* (Symphony Space; May 19.)

Robin Hood (1922)—The big, handsome Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., version, directed by Allan Dwan, and featuring extraordinarily expensive sets and Fairbanks' beautiful athletic prowess. With Wallace Beery as Richard the Lion-Hearted, Enid Bennett as Marian, and Alan Hale as Little John (the same role he played sixteen years later in the Errol Flynn version). Silent.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; May 16-17.)

Shooting Fish—An amiable but uneven comedy about two attractive swindlers (Stuart Townsend and Dan Futterman) and the

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, 2, and 3, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

mischievous beauty (Kate Beckinsale) who cons them. The film is paced like a breezy sixties romp and there are some good gags, but the plot's a bit creaky and lacks the clever zing of a good scam. The luminous wonder of the film is Beckinsale ("Cold Comfort Farm"); her performance is a true lark.—*B.D.* (Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

Sidewalks of New York (1931)—This assembly-line M-G-M Buster Keaton vehicle, directed by Jules White and Zion Myers, hits every possible pothole. It's arguably Keaton's worst film (though it was, inexplicably, a hit). He plays a naïve millionaire slumlord who falls in love with a delinquent's big sister and opens a gym for tenement boys. The setup forces Keaton to be a confused, bumbling reactor to the wised-up street kids. The star's heart isn't in it—even a human punching bag should have more fight in him.—*M.S.* (Film Forum 2; May 18.)

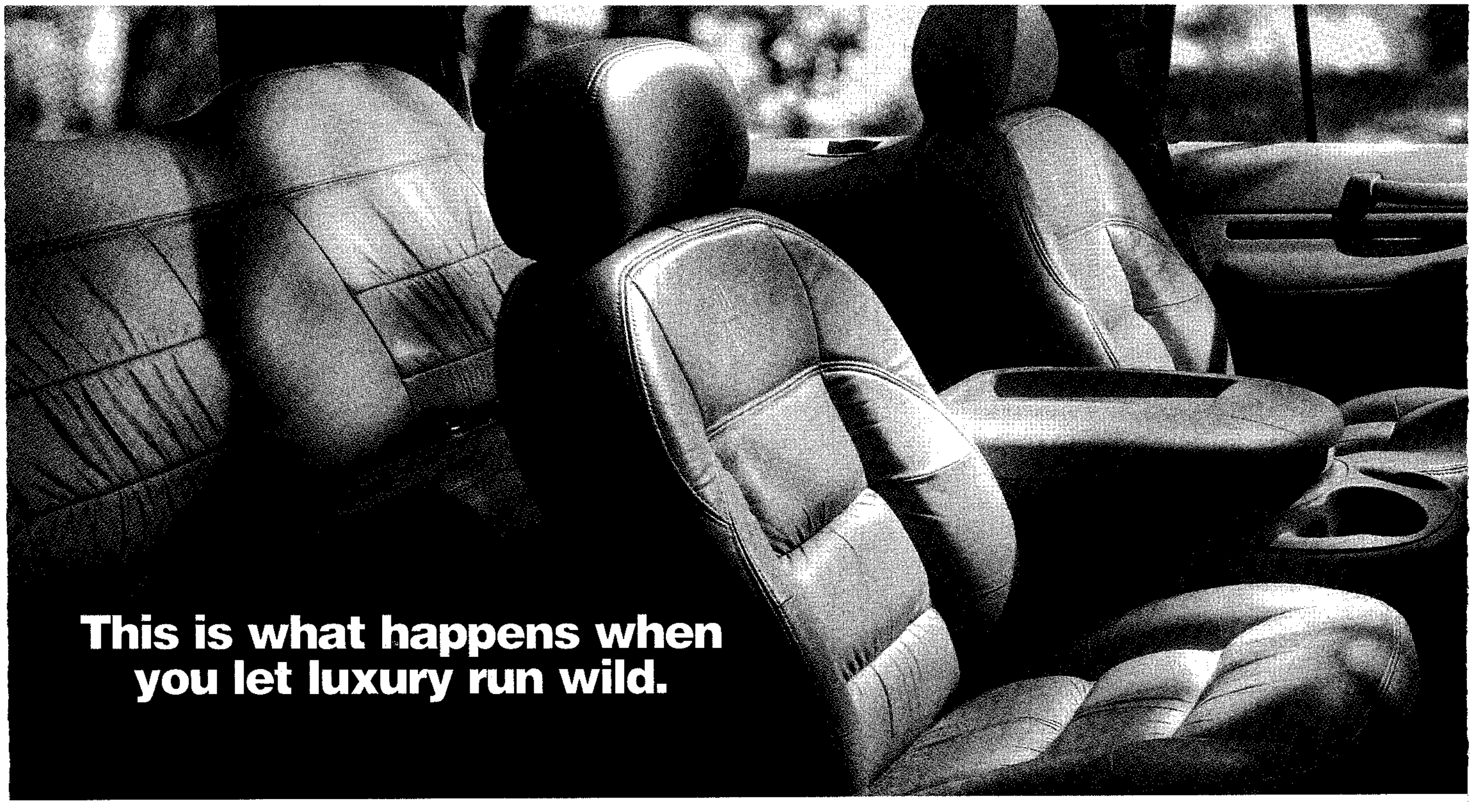
Sliding Doors—Gwyneth Paltrow dons an accent and a dose of English reserve to play Helen, an unfulfilled Londoner who works in public relations. One day as she's running to catch a train she bumps her head and splits into two parallel lives. In the first version she goes home to her caddish boyfriend and continues with her depressing life; in the second version she finds him cheating on her, leaves, starts her own business, gets a smashing new hairdo, and takes up with the nice guy she deserves (John Hannah, a charming Scot with thick brows). Paltrow is as radiant as ever, but she keeps picking parts that focus on technical skills like accents—she has yet to perform the real star's trick of being herself, and inviting the audience to identify. Peter Howitt wrote and directed the likable, shallow script.—*Sarah Kerr* (Chelsea Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Spanish Prisoner—A young inventor (Campbell Scott) dreams up something called "the Process" that is destined to bring untold wealth to his bosses but not to himself. When he airs this grievance to a businessman whom he meets in the Caribbean (Steve Martin), he finds himself enmeshed in a plot from which there is no escape, unless you count the suspiciously loving attentions of a fellow-employee (Rebecca Pidgeon). If you're prepared to ignore the plot's absurdities, David Mamet's film is addictive, and Carter Burwell's score works on you like a massage. The film also offers the sharpest and most quizzical work that Steve Martin has turned in for some time.—*A.L.* (4/13/98) (Angelika Film Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Two Girls and a Guy—Written and directed by James Toback, who, since the 1978 "Fingers," has busied himself with tales of obsessive behavior. This latest effort is set almost entirely in a New York apartment, owned by an actor named Blake (Robert Downey, Jr.), who comes home to discover that the two women he has been dating—Carla (Heather Graham) and Lou (Natasha Gregson Wagner)—have broken into his place. The movie is an exercise in vigorous self-exculpation, and Blake almost gets away with it. The trouble is simply that you don't believe the setup—why would the girls hang around while the guy tries to win them back? What rescues the whole enterprise is the presence of Downey, whose mood dances between the frivolous and the hunted; it's not his best role, but it answers to all that is seductive and untrustworthy in his eyes. The opening music, by the way, is Brahms—the climax of his Horn Trio, which is the best joke in the movie.—*A.L.* (4/27/98 & 5/4/98) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, and Lincoln Square.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE APOSTLE (reviewed in our issue of 2/2/98): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **ARTEMISIA:** Angelika Film Center and Cinema II. . . . **AS GOOD AS IT GETS** (1/5/98): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE BIG HIT:** 84th Street Sixplex, Metro Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **BLACK DOG:** Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and State. . . . **DARK CITY:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **DÉJÀ VU:** Quad Cinema. . . . **GREASE:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **GREY GARDENS:** Film Forum. . . . **HOMEGROWN:** Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **THE KINGDOM, PART 2:** Film Forum. . . . **L.A. CONFIDENTIAL** (9/22/97): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **LITTLE MEN:** 64th and 2nd. . . . **MARIUS AND JEANNETTE:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **MEN WITH GUNS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Chelsea West, Criterion Center, East 85th Street, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE OBJECT OF MY AFFECTION:** Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **PARALLEL SONS:** The Screening Room. . . . **PAULIE:** Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Guild, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **A PRICE ABOVE RUBIES:** New York Twin. . . . **PRIMARY COLORS:** Coronet Cinemas and Ziegfeld. . . . **TITANIC** (12/15/97): Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **THE TRUCE:** Cinema 3rd Avenue and Village East Cinemas. . . . **WILDE:** Paris and Quad Cinema. . . . **WILD MAN BLUES:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **WOO:** Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, Sutton, and Village Theatre VII.



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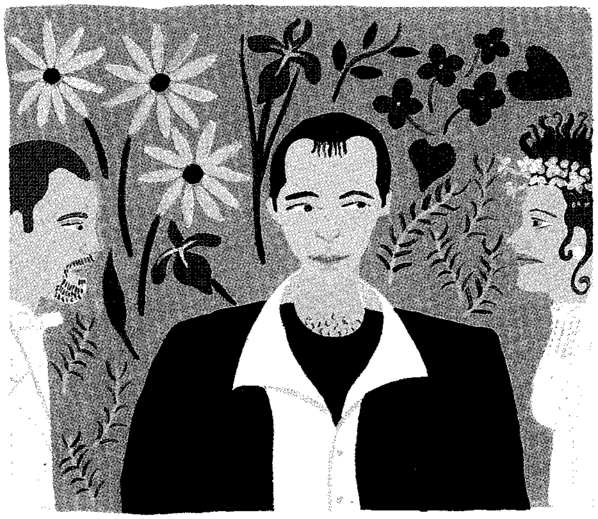
Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—May 13: "The Tender Trap" (1955, Charles Walters) and "Come Blow Your Horn" (1963, Bud Yorkin).... May 14: "Nothing Sacred" (1937, William Wellman) and "My Man Godfrey" (1936, Gregory LaCava).... May 15-16: "The King of Comedy" (1982, Martin Scorsese) and "After Hours" (†).... May 17: "The Awful Truth" (1937, Leo McCarey) and "Holiday" (1938, George Cukor).... May 18: "The Cameraman" (†) and "Sidewalks of New York" (†).... May 19: "The Odd Couple" (1968, Gene Saks) and "The Out-of-Towners" (1970, Arthur Hiller).



Opening May 15, Joel S. Keller, Chris Leavins, and Kerry Fox in "The Hanging Garden."

CLAUDIA PEARSON

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A series of films made between 1966 and 1969. May 14 at 2:30: "Rosemary's Baby" (1968, Roman Polanski).... May 14 at 6: "Bonnie and Clyde" (1967, Arthur Penn).... May 15 at 2:30: "Point Blank" (1967, John Boorman).... May 15 at 6: "I Was 19" (1968, Konrad Wolf; in German).... May 15 at 8: "Easy Rider" (1969, Dennis Hopper).... May 18 at 2:30 and May 19 at 6: "My Night at Maud's" (1969, Eric Rohmer; in French).... May 19 at 2:30: "Lucia" (1969, Humberto Solás; a Cuban film, in Spanish).... ¶ May 14 at 6: One program in a series about the history of 8-mm. films and videos in the United States.... ¶ May 14 at 6:30 and May 15 at 3: "Tropi-Cola" (1997, Steve Fagin).... ¶ A program of films from Finland; in Finnish, with English subtitles. May 15 at 6 and May 16 at 3: "Hulda from Juurako" (1937, Valentin Vaala).... May 15 at 8: "One Man's War" (1973, Risto Jarva).... May 16 at 1: "The Village Shoemakers" (1923, Erkki Karu; a silent film, with French intertitles).... May 16 at 5: "Substitute Husband" (1936, Vaala).... May 17 at 1: "Blue Week" (1954, Maati Kassila).... May 17 at 3: "Evacuated" (1956, Ville Salminen).... May 18 at 3: "Eight Deadly Shots" (1972, Mikko Niskanen).... ¶ May 16 at 2 and May 17 at 5: "Robin Hood" (†).... ¶ May 16 at 5 and May 17 at 2: "The Adventures of Robin Hood" (1938, Michael Curtiz and William Keighley).... ¶ May 18 at 6: "Bus Stop" (1956, Joshua Logan).... ¶ May 18 at 6:30: A program of short films by Joel Schlemowitz, who will be present.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of films from Argentina; in Spanish, with English subtitles. May 13 at 2 and May 14 at 4:15 and 8:45: "Martin Fierro" (1968, Leopoldo Torre Nilsson).... May 13 at 4:15 and May 14 at 2 and 6:30: "The Knight of the Sword" (1970, Nilsson).... May 15 at 2 and 6 and May 17 at 7:45: "The Angry Toy" (1997, Javier Torre).... May 15 at 4:15 and May 16 at 4 and 7:45: "Moebius" (1996, Gustavo Mosquera).... May 15 at 8 and May 17 at 4: "Facundo, the Shadow of the Tiger" (1995, Nicolas Sarquis).... May 16 at 5:45 and 9:30: "Buenos Aires Vice Versa" (1996, Alejandro Agresti).... May 19 at 2: "Under the Same Skin" (1961, Daniel Tynaire).... May 19 at 4:15: "El Jefe" (1958, Fernando Ayala).... ¶ Weekend showings for children. May 16-17 at 2: "Chasing the Kidneystone" (1996, Vibeke Idsöe).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of independent films made in New York City. May 16-17 at 2: "Chelsea Girls" (1966, Andy Warhol).

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—May 19 at 7: "Mon Oncle" (†).... May 19 at 9: "The Umbrellas of Cherbourg" (1964, Jacques Demy; in French).

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through May 31: "Skokie" (1981, Herbert Wise). (Showings Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 2 and 4; Thursdays and Fridays at 2, 4, and 6.)

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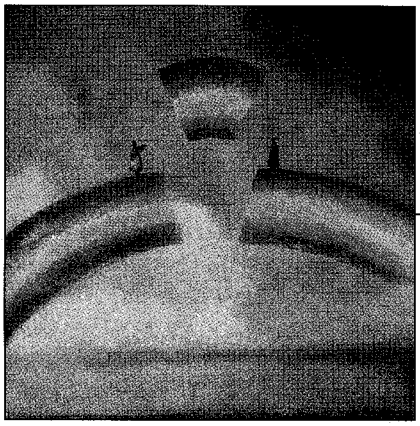

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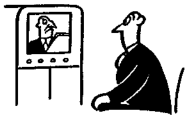
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

THE CULTURE INDUSTRY

Why we want our television shows to die before they get old.



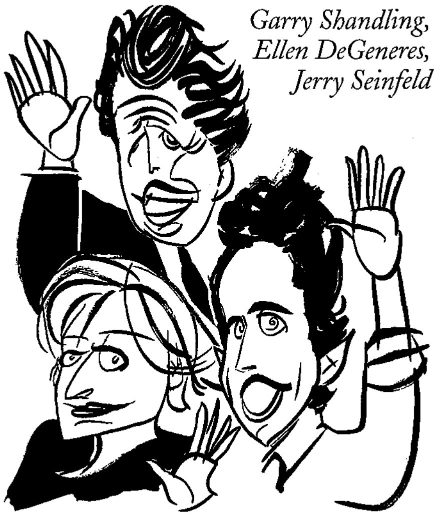
WE are about to begin a pop-cultural Lent, what historians may one day call the Time of the Great Television Endings—"Seinfeld," done; "Ellen," done; "Murphy Brown," done; "Larry Sanders," done. Why now? Because spectacular television finales have been, for the last thirty years, the unmistakable maturity milestones for the postwar generation. Because that same generation has, in adulthood, become chronically wistful. Because baby boomers are now as close to death as they are to youth.

When baby boomers were children, television series just ended, without fanfare. One season you watched "Leave It to Beaver" or "Rawhide," the next season you didn't. No one engaged in speculative water-cooler conversations—that is, drinking-fountain conversations—about the final episodes of "Combat!" or "The Dick Van Dyke Show." The series just went off the air. There were no great national chatterings, no barrages of media coverage, except, of course, the one time a real-life event led to the demise of a TV show—when Lucille Ball divorced Desi Arnaz, thus beginning the sixties.

The first time America became hysterical about the finale of a TV series was in 1967, with "The Fugitive." The show didn't simply stop and slink away, like other series; instead, the one-armed man is found and killed, the wrongly accused hero is retried but acquitted, justice triumphs tidily. The End. Unlike novels or movies or plays, American series television tends by its nature to defy time, change, resolution. Like a young person who doesn't quite believe he will ever die, a TV series has an implicit ontology of immortality. And so "The Fugitive" concluded startlingly and definitively in 1967, the year the first baby boomers turned twenty-one. In 1967, baby boomers were leaving home, grandparents started to die off, parents began divorcing. The Edenic American childhood was ending.

For a decade, no other show concluded in such a spectacular, galvanizing fashion. The next gala series death was that of the first Smart Modern Sitcom, the "Seinfeld" of the seventies, "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." In its final episode, a new owner buys the station and fires everyone, except the moronic, unworthy Ted Baxter: Injustice triumphs. The End. How 1977: a majority of baby boomers had now passed into adulthood, their parents had begun to retire and die, and ironic disillusionment was the ascendant American paradigm.

Then came the end of "M*A*S*H." In a technical sense, "M*A*S*H" was about the Korean War, not Vietnam, but its sensibility and its success were entirely post-Vietnam artifacts: smart-alecky, ambivalent McGovernite Peter Pans putting off respectable careers in favor of an extended adolescence of casual sex and substance abuse. Its final episode—the war ends, everyone goes home—aired in 1983, eight years after the Vietnam War ended. By then, the major epiphenomena of the youthquake (casual sex, stylish substance abuse, sideburns) were disappearing, and even the youngest baby boomer was old enough to vote and marry and take out a mortgage.



Garry Shandling, Ellen DeGeneres, Jerry Seinfeld

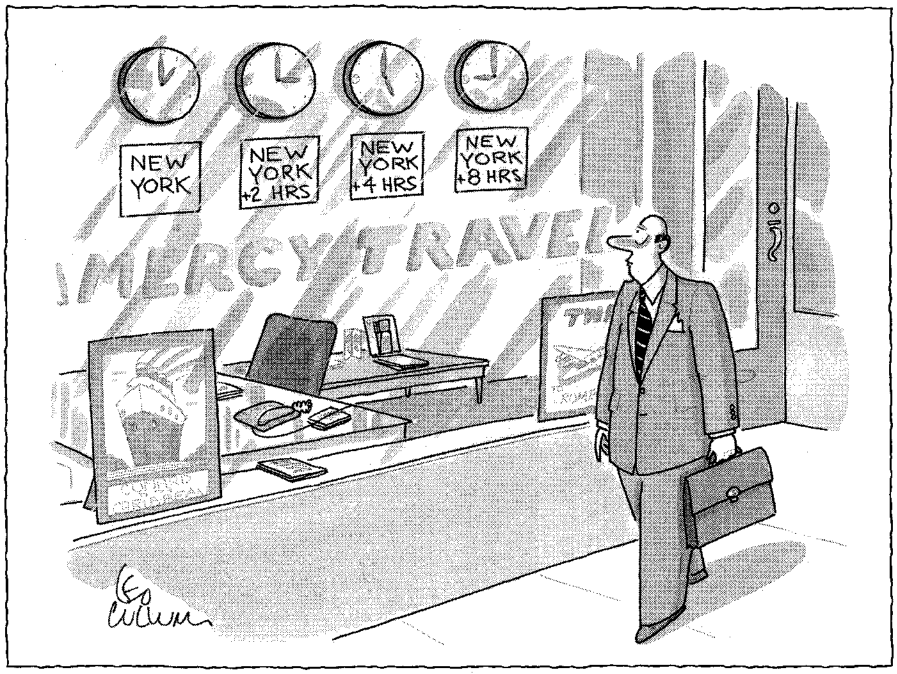
Now, in 1998, every baby boomer is middle-aged. For a forty-two-year-old, let alone a fifty-two-year-old, retirement and death—one's own Final Episodes—are no longer unthinkable abstractions. And so there is suddenly just one great, overriding political issue: optimizing Social Security payouts for the twenty-first century. The deaths of Princess Diana and Linda McCartney—Linda McCartney!—would not have received nearly so much attention twenty years ago, before death was a major item on the baby boomers' agenda. Baby boomers are now interested in the warp and woof of endings, in how to wind down gracefully, comfortably, meaningfully. Moreover, because this generation is now old enough not only to have created its own beloved TV series but to see the shows die after good long runs, America is being forced to spend the rest of May obsessively picking over final episodes of four *echt*-boomer sitcoms—"Seinfeld," this week, along with "Ellen," "Murphy Brown" next week, then "The Larry Sanders Show."

For baby boomers, who tend to be nostalgia addicts as well as narcissists, these shows have provided crypto-nostalgia in contemporary drag—life the way it was for a forty-something back in nineteen-seventy-something. The main characters on "Seinfeld," "Ellen," and "Larry Sanders" are all over thirty-five but are single and childless: free to be charmingly self-involved and fun-loving. (Murphy Brown is still single; after she acquired a child, the show's ratings went into serious decline.) Indulging this real-time nostalgia for the late sixties and sev-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

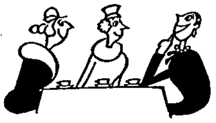
enties, the modern ideal of perpetual youth and permanent horniness, is now the goal of the American pharmaceutical industry as well: fifty-year-old men are paying whatever it costs to score the new Austin Powers miracle drugs, Viagra and Propecia, the way they used to pay whatever it cost to score Quaaludes and acid.

So which is it: a generation finally ready to grow up, finally facing the fact that life doesn't go on forever? Or seventy-nine million vain, goofy people who want to believe they're wild and crazy right up to the instant of brain death? Both, of course. Having it all is the baby-boomer dream. —KURT ANDERSEN



THE BOARDS

Granny, Mum, and Tash take an intergenerational coffee break.



LADY RACHEL KEMPSON REDGRAVE (widow of Michael Redgrave), her daughter Vanessa, and her granddaughter Natasha Richardson—three generations of theatrical Redgraves—were in town at the same fleeting moment last matinée Wednesday, so they met over coffee at the Mayflower Hotel's Conservatory Café and had a quick "catch-up," as they called it. Natasha, beautiful, cheerful, all-together wife of Liam Neeson, the mother of their two small boys, and a Tony nominee for her knockout performance as Sally Bowles in "Cabaret," was in gray sweats and sneakers. Vanessa, her white hair tousled, and Rachel, *her* white hair elegantly coiffed, had just returned from Springfield, Massachusetts, where they had performed "Sarah Bernhardt Comes to Town," a Vanessa Redgrave-created show compiled from the stories and plays of Anton Chekhov. They were planning to take the show up to Bard College later that day, and to put it on this week, back in New York, at Symphony Space, at Broadway and Ninety-fifth Street. There would be a lot of back-and-forth.

"It's so special when we come together like this," Natasha said. "How was it in Massachusetts, Mum? Granny?"

"Standing ovations," Lady Redgrave said. "The entire audience, standing."

"Everyone up and shouting, 'Woo, woo! Whee, whee!' " Vanessa said. "The next day, I spoke at the State House. About education for our children. And we met the governor."

"We were given a large gold key to the city," Lady Redgrave said.

"It's a *very* large key, Tash," Vanessa added. She touched the trinkets that were on a chain around her neck—a Madonna medallion, a Claddagh ring, a bit of pink plastic. "Daisy, Joely's daughter, gave the pink one to me," she said.

"Lovely," Lady Redgrave said.

Outside, on Central Park West, a festooned horse and carriage came clomping along. The heads of all three Redgraves turned as one to the café window and longingly watched it pass by.

"Wish we could go," Vanessa said.

"We always go, every visit," Lady Redgrave said.

"Granny, perhaps next week," Natasha said. "I have two shows today. No time even for a feet-up."

"I say first things first," Lady Redgrave remarked. "We should all have a feet-up. At least, that's my view."

"We're going up to Bard College tonight," Vanessa said. "We had one of those misunderstandings. They didn't understand that we come with a full production—with lights, sound, music. We just learned they don't have the facilities for the entire production at Bard. So we engaged the students to help us. I'll be playing the trumpet."

"It will get on," Lady Redgrave said. "It's not good to worry."

"I've got to be back in New York by the eighteenth," Vanessa said. "I start filming with Tim Robbins—'The Cradle Will Rock.' "

"We'll have the weekend together, at the farm in the country," Natasha said. "We worry about you, Mum. You don't eat. You don't sleep. You drink coffee, coffee, coffee."

"You won't have a million guests at the farm this time?" Vanessa asked.

"Just Ron Rifkin and his wife," Natasha said.

"Good. I can cook," Vanessa said. "You always make something right for everybody, Tash," she added, holding her daughter's head between her hands and kissing the top of it.

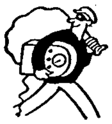
"Got to go. Two performances today," Natasha announced.

"Hope it goes brilliantly," Lady Redgrave said.

"Have two wonderful ones," Vanessa said. —LILLIAN ROSS

TV LAND

One true-life "Seinfeld" episode you'll never see in reruns.



"SEINFELD" may be finished, but there is no end to the Seinfeldian in real life. On April 11th, three days after Jerry and friends taped their final episode, several intruders paid a visit to the show's set on Stage Nine, in Studio City, California. What follows is a heretofore unreported true story, as it might have been scripted for the sitcom:

SCENE 1: *The deserted "Seinfeld" set. Enter several writers and staffers from a neighboring show, looking for souvenirs. After all, the set is just going to be struck now, right? Salt and pepper shakers from Monk's coffee shop are filched. Cereal boxes from Jerry's kitchen are swiped. A Swiss Army knife is employed to detach Jerry's apartment intercom—prize booty—from the wall. "It's like Archie Bunker's chair!" the looter breathes, stuffing the intercom down his pants. Pan to a hidden security camera, filming the unknowing pillagers.*

SCENE 2: *An anonymous apartment in Los Angeles, several days later. The purloined intercom sits on the coffee table. A telephone rings. The looter answers, hearing a familiar voice.*

VOICE: This is Jerry Seinfeld.

LOOTER (*nervously*): Er, how are you?

SEINFELD: I am *extremely* angry. They had security cameras on the stage, and they saw you stealing the intercom. Where is it?

LOOTER (*panicked*): I don't have it. I didn't take it.

SEINFELD (*sardonically*): You didn't take it.

LOOTER (*pacing his apartment frantically, thinking fast*): I *did* have it—but, but as I was leaving, some guy with a security badge came and took it off me.

SEINFELD: So that wasn't you on the security camera taking it?

LOOTER: No, that was me.

SEINFELD: So you *do* have it?

LOOTER (*lamely*): Well, I don't—but I can try to get it back for you.

SEINFELD (*sharply*): Here's my producer's number. When you find it, give her a call.

Looter hangs up the phone, despairing.

SCENE 3: *An hour and a half later. Looter thinks enough time has passed to make it plausible that he has been engaged in a search for the intercom. Looter calls "Seinfeld" producer.*

LOOTER (*brightly*): I am looking for the intercom as we speak!

PRODUCER: You'd better do more than look, Mister. If you know what's good for you, you'll bring it back here.

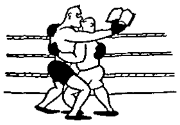
Closeup on Looter's defeated face.

SCENE 4: *The following day. Looter returns to the lot, hangdog, and surrenders the intercom—which, he learns, Seinfeld wants for his personal collection of memorabilia. Gets yelled at by producer. Returns home to anonymous apartment, where he composes letter to Jerry in which he begs forgiveness and expresses the hope that the great comedian would have done the same thing in his place.*

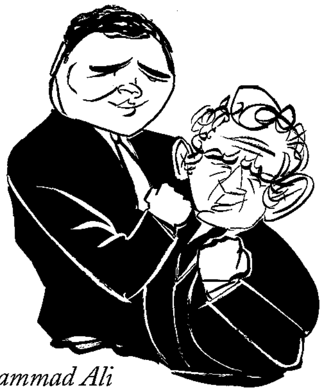
Looter shuffles papers on coffee table where intercom latterly sat. Among them is a Polaroid photograph. It is of Looter posing with the intercom—a last memento of Looter's brush with television history. Looter gazes at it, hoping that he isn't television history himself. —REBECCA MEAD

INK

Two fighting legends reminisce and ruminate over the cheese puffs.



NORMAN MAILER, his eyes sparkling and his laughter bubbling up as usual, was in top form, generous and gracious, last week, at his Random House party celebrating the publication of "The Time of Our Time," an astonishing, three-and-three-quarters-pound literary retrospective spanning his career since the publication, fifty years ago, of his first novel, "The Naked and the Dead." Present and accounted for at the Rainbow Room were Mailer's family, including Norris Church, the tall, handsome, red-haired painter who is his sixth wife; most of his nine children, from his eldest, Susan (married to an economics minister in the Chilean government), to his youngest, John (a student at Wesleyan); and a friendly assortment of luminaries from literature, television, academia, entertainment, sports, politics, and the underworld.



Muhammad Ali and Norman Mailer

So what did Mailer busy himself with at his party, where all his guests were given a copy of his new book, in addition to excellent champagne, a lot of superior cheese puffs, chicken satay, grilled-tuna toasts, coconut shrimp, ravioli, roast beef, and the offerings of a well-stocked bar? This: Mailer brought his guests over to his friends Muhammad Ali and Ali's wife, Lonnie, and introduced the guests by name one at a time. He looked on happily as dozens of people said to Ali, "Muhammad, you will always be the greatest!" and shook his large paw. Some said, "I saw you fight in '64!," or "It's an honor to meet you," or "It's a great honor to meet you," or "I saw you fight Sonny Liston, the Big Ugly Bear," and bowed their heads in wonder. Muhammad Ali looked each guest in the eye and smiled gently. Jose Torres, another boxer, came over and said, "You're still the greatest." Ali raised a clenched fist at him kiddingly, and Torres said, "Not me. All I can do is run away from you." Ali gave him a bigger smile, and Mailer was joyful.

Mailer told Muhammad Ali a little bit about how things were going with his television appearances to promote his book. "Katie Couric reminded me of your style, Muhammad, in the way she hit at me," he said at one point. "You know, the way you move, sweetly, and then—ow!—punch sharply. With her sweet little voice, she called me a 'male chauvinist pig.' " Mailer's laughter bubbled up, and Muhammad Ali smiled.

A lot of photographers were at the party, and they took a lot of photographs of Mailer with Ali. George Plimpton came over, and the photographers took pictures of the trio as they made rabbit ears over each other's heads. Thus stimulated, other guests stood with Ali to be photographed. Most of the Rainbow Room waiters rushed over and put their heads into the frame with Ali, and they also got photographed. Mailer looked on and beamed. After that, Muhammad Ali did some magic tricks, including one, involving a fake thumb, that made a crinkly piece of tissue paper disappear in his hand. Then Muhammad Ali signed his own name to a number of copies of "The Time of Our Time." And the guests at Norman Mailer's book party left smiling and satisfied.

—LILLIAN ROSS

ANNALS OF LAW

STARR CAN'T HELP IT

But is the prosecutor to blame, or the law that created him?

BY JEFFREY TOOBIN

If some local district attorney had just had a week like Kenneth Starr's, he'd probably be thinking about running for governor. Last Tuesday, the chief federal judge for the District of Columbia handed Starr, the Whitewater independent counsel, a major victory in his battle with the White House over executive privilege. The day before, Starr had obtained an indictment of Susan McDougal, a former business partner of the President's, on charges of criminal contempt and obstruction of justice. The previous Thursday, Starr's Washington grand jury had handed up a forty-two-page indictment of Webster Hubbell, a former Associate Attorney General and a close friend of the Clintons, accusing him and three others in a complex scheme of income-tax evasion. And not long before that the federal court ruled that Starr could not be forced to give immunity to the central figure in his Washington investigation, Monica Lewinsky. Does all this mean that Starr's name will be inscribed in the crime-fighters' pantheon alongside the names of prosecutors like Thomas E. Dewey, Rudolph Giuliani, and Archibald Cox?

Actually, no. To judge from public-opinion polls—Starr's approval rating in a recent NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll was eighteen per cent—the independent counsel would be lucky to get his driver's license renewed without a fight. Vast numbers of Americans perceive him as a right-wing zealot, whose seemingly limitless pursuit of his quarry springs from political animus, prudery, and piety—an impression compounded by the man's unctuous manner. Indeed, by bringing the new cases against McDougal and Hubbell—Starr's third set of charges against her and his second against him—Starr is employing a tactic that many prosecutors would hesitate to use against the Mafia. More than once, Starr's investigation of the Lewinsky case has made it look as if his real target were the Bill of Rights rather than Bill Clinton. Is Starr out of control? Is he—as the White House and its allies suggest almost daily—Torquemada in wire-rim glasses?

Actually, no. Starr and his staff have made more than their share of blunders over the past four years. But a fair accounting of the problems of the office of the independent counsel—the ever-expanding scope, length, and cost of its work, and its insistent focus on behavior that may not be criminal at all—suggest that these problems owe more to the nature of the law establishing the office than to any particular occupant. The Starr investigation represents a case study in the unintended consequences of reform.

The independent-counsel law was passed in 1978, following a legislative process that began in response to the Saturday Night Massacre of 1973—the firing, on President Nixon's orders, of Archibald Cox, who had been appointed Watergate special prosecutor by Nixon's own Attorney General. But, as with campaign-finance reform (another offspring of the Nixon scandals), the independent-counsel law has ended up compounding the problems it was designed to address. It has created a prosecutor who is at once too strong and too weak, and whose work is easily—and to a certain extent inescapably—politicized.

Starr's tenure and budget are unlimited, but this is not an unmixed blessing for him. Starr's power allows his targets to play David to his Goliath. They have an incentive to delay—after which they can complain that they are being endlessly pursued. Starr's attempts to fight back in public are hamstrung by the rules of grand-jury secrecy, which prevent him from disclosing either his tactics or his results.

Starr, of course, tends to exacerbate his own problems. With his continuing private law practice and his political al-

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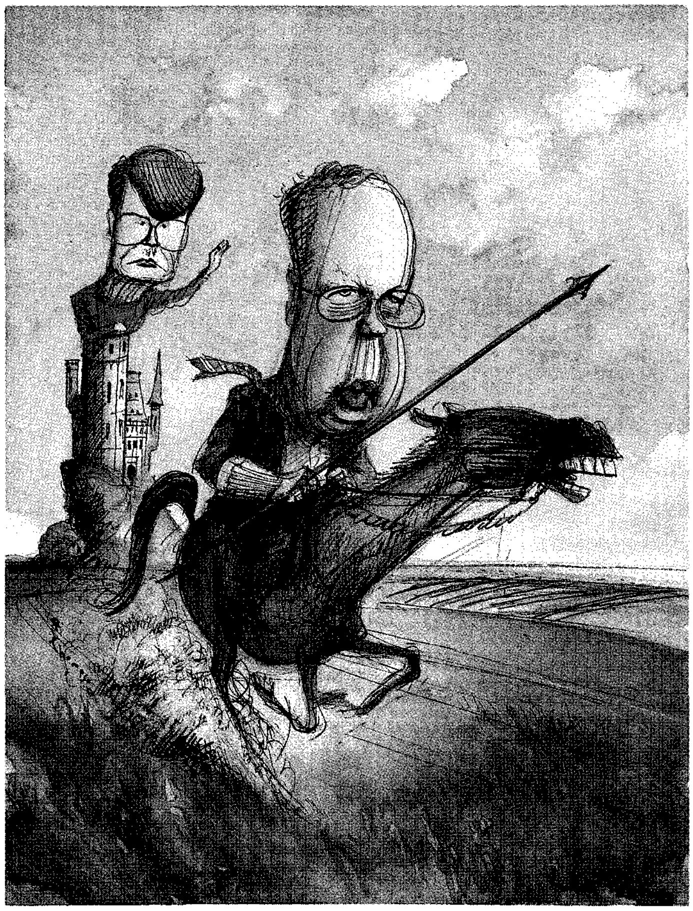
liances, the prosecutor has made himself vulnerable to both the appearance and the reality of conflict of interest—and conflict of interest is precisely what the independent-counsel law was designed to avoid. But for all that Starr now appears trapped in a purgatory of bad press, his investigation remains a threat to the effectiveness—and even, perhaps, to the existence—of the Clinton Presidency.



After four years, Kenneth Starr's investigation represents a case study in the unintended consequences of reform.

RICHARD THOMPSON

ACCORDING to Clinton's defenders, Ken Starr is Babbitt with a badge—a minister's son from San Antonio who shined shoes for fun as a kid, jogged to the cadence of hymns as an adult, and now calls down legal hellfire and brimstone as a prosecutor. In one of the impromptu press conferences that Starr likes to give in the driveway of his home, in McLean, Virginia, he compared himself to Joe Friday, but his awkward public manner could scarcely differ more from the just-the-facts-Ma'am "Dragnet" detective's. Unable to talk about the evidence, Starr instead offers pious lectures. "There's no room for white lies. There's no room for shading," he said, still standing in his driveway. "You cannot defile the temple of justice."

Starr does fit an archetype, but it is neither Joe Friday nor Torquemada. Starr is a Washington insider, and he has navigated the capital more by self-interest than by ideology. Powerful mentors guided him to success. In 1975, he clerked for Chief Justice Warren Burger. Then he spent four years in the law firm of President Reagan's first Attorney General, William French Smith. In 1983, when Starr was just thirty-seven years old, Burger and Smith engineered his appointment to the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, the second-most-important court in the nation.

Starr made few enemies on the court, even though it was ideologically riven. Abner Mikva, a fellow-judge on the D.C. Circuit and later President Clinton's White House counsel, recalls serving on a three-judge panel with Starr and Laurence Silberman, a combative conservative: "When we went into the robing room after the argument, Judge Silberman and I got into a famous contretemps. We really got into it, and he threatened me with bodily harm. The whole time, Ken kept looking at the ceiling. You could see it was like he was saying to himself, 'I'm not here. I'm not seeing this.' He was a gentle person who looked to avoid controversies."

In 1989, President Bush persuaded Starr to step down from his lifetime judicial appointment and become Solicitor General—the government's chief advocate before the Supreme Court. Nicknamed the Solicitous General for his deferential style in front of the Justices, Starr argued for a series of conservative positions, especially on abortion. Yet Starr, like Bush himself, never convinced the hard-core right that he was one of them. After Clinton was elected, in 1992, Starr became a partner in the Washington office of the law firm Kirkland & Ellis, where he currently earns more than a million dollars a year. Paul Cappuccio, a colleague of Starr's in the Justice Department, who now has an office adjoining his at Kirkland & Ellis, says, "Ken is not on the Supreme Court today because he was viewed as suspect by the Republican right. They called him a squish—too moderate and open-minded."

In the fall of 1993, Starr was summoned from his profitable exile for a sensitive assignment. The Senate ethics committee was investigating Robert Packwood for sexual and other misconduct, and the presiding Democrats asked Starr to review Packwood's diaries for material relevant to the case. In announcing Starr's assignment, the Washington *Post* observed, "Even those who regularly crossed swords with him credited him with being fair. He was not seen as ideologically driven." According to Larry Urgenson, another partner at Kirkland & Ellis, who worked with Starr on the Packwood diaries, "The Packwood thing was a very hot issue, and there was never a hint of a leak. All the parties respected him. You certainly never heard, as you do now, that he's obsessed by sex, sex, sex."

So it was not surprising that, in early 1994, when Attorney General Janet Reno was deciding whom to appoint as the first Whitewater prosecutor Starr's name was on her short list. (Originally, a three-judge panel had been established to name the prosecutor, but the independent-counsel law had expired, so the Attorney General assumed the responsibility.) Philip Heymann, who was then Reno's deputy, got in touch with a number of prominent Republican lawyers to see if they might be interested in serving as the prosecutor. "I spoke to Bob Fiske, Warren Rudman, Bill Webster, Donald Ayer, and Starr," Heymann recalled. "I knew Starr hadn't been a prosecutor, but I heard that he was a responsible and intelligent man." Reno ultimately chose Fiske, an experienced prosecutor who had been a U.S. Attorney under Presi-

"Hey, big guy. Can I buy you a pair of underpants?"

dents Ford and Carter. But Congress then reauthorized the independent-counsel law. The three-judge panel, chaired by the conservative David Sentelle, removed Fiske, after he had served for just seven months, on the dubious ground that he could have had a "perceived" conflict of interest, because he had been appointed by Reno. Shortly before Starr was named, Sentelle met with Senators Jesse Helms and Lauch Faircloth, both of whom are ardent Clinton foes. All three men have denied discussing Starr's appointment, but the timing of their meeting was suspicious. Starr was sworn in on August 9, 1994.

THE appearance of partisanship—one of the things the independent-counsel law was intended to prevent—tainted Starr's tenure from the first. In private practice, Starr kept a hand in the causes he had favored when he was in government: he was active in several conservative organizations, he offered to draft a brief in support of Paula Jones, and, it later emerged, he accepted a deanship that was partly funded by Richard Mellon Scaife, who has underwritten many anti-Clinton activities. A team of career prosecutors from the Justice Department would almost certainly have had fewer conflicts of interest than Starr.

At first, Starr's investigation had much in common with Fiske's. "When Bob Fiske came to Little Rock, he was obsessed with Lawrence Walsh," a senior Whitewater investigator told me, referring to the Iran-Contra prosecutor whose investigation dragged on for seven years. "He set an informal one-year deadline. It had to be done quickly, cheaply. It was seven days a week, fourteen-hour days, blitzkrieg. Starr kept that up. We would have meeting after meeting, and Starr would always say something like 'Today is October 5th, exactly eight weeks since I became I.C., and this is what I have not accomplished. We're not going to be Lawrence Walsh. I'm not going to be here forever.'" Starr asked his staff—initially a collection of top prosecutors from around the nation—for commitments of just one year, because he believed that he could complete the investigation promptly.

Though it didn't turn out that way, the burst of prosecutorial energy paid off. Starr had an enormously productive first year. On December 6, 1994, Webster Hubbell pleaded guilty to defrauding the Rose Law Firm of more than four hundred thousand dollars. On June 7, 1995, Starr indicted Jim Guy Tucker, Clinton's successor as governor of Arkansas, and two others in a bankruptcy-fraud case. On August 17, 1995, Starr charged Tucker and James and Susan McDougal in a conspiracy case involving Madison Guaranty Savings & Loan, which was linked to the Clintons' Whitewater investment. The Starr office was following a time-honored strategy for white-collar investigations: begin by prosecuting the midlevel players, in the hope that they will turn against the top people. In this respect, Starr resembled Walsh, who, in his first year or so as independent counsel, secured guilty pleas from two close associates of Oliver North and brought the case that later resulted in the convictions of North and John Poindexter. (I was a junior prosecutor on Walsh's staff.)

But in 1996 defense lawyers adopted an equally venerable strategy: delay. Stalling is, of course, a favorite tactic of defense lawyers—it creates opportunities for witnesses' memories to fade over time, and maybe even for evidence to be lost—but independent counsels are especially vulnerable to it. Despite the lack of a set time limit on their investigations, independent counsels are temporary political appointees, and they rely on building momentum quickly. Starr was not to repeat the successes of his first year. Governor Tucker waited almost three years before pleading guilty in the bankruptcy-fraud case. The defendants also stalled in coöperating with Starr. Jim McDougal did eventually turn on the Clintons and admit his own wrongdoing, but not until 1997; by then he had already lied under oath, rendering his credibility virtually nonexistent. (He died two months ago.) Hubbell never produced any useful information against the Clintons, and he still maintains that he has nothing to say, despite his reindictment. Susan McDougal, who was sentenced to two years in the Madison Guaranty case, chose to serve an additional eighteen months in jail for civil contempt rather than testify before Starr's grand jury. She faces another prison sentence in the new criminal-contempt case, but after all this time as a Starr refusenik she is unlikely ever to be of much use to the investigation.

The jurisdiction of Starr's investigation may be its most perplexing feature. Over four years, he has examined such diverse subjects as the Whitewater land deal; the suicide of Vincent Foster; the 1993 firings of several career employees in the White House travel office, an incident that became known as Travelgate; Filegate, which involved the transfer of F.B.I. files on Reagan and Bush Administration officials to the Clinton White House, also in 1993; and, finally, the Lewinsky saga. Why? Again, the answer lies in the independent-counsel law. "The law has a very pernicious effect on politicians," Cass Sunstein, a professor at the University of Chicago Law School, who wrote a critique of the law in a recent issue of *The American Prospect*, says. "Any time there's a controversy in the newspapers, you start to see calls that we need an independent counsel."

The Foster suicide provides a tragicomic example of the perversity of the independent-counsel law in action. Foster, a deputy White House counsel, died on July 20, 1993, in Fort Marcy Park, in suburban Virginia. About a month later, the Justice Department, the F.B.I., and the Park Police jointly announced the results of their investigation into his death: that he had committed suicide. But, in part because Foster had left a note containing references to the Clintons' troubles, Robert Fiske, the first Whitewater prosecutor, decided to reëxamine the case. On June 30, 1994, Fiske released a report in which he agreed that Foster had killed himself. But that wasn't enough for some in Congress, so the House Committee on Government Operations opened its own investigation, only to come to the same conclusion, on August 12, 1994. The Senate Banking Committee did the same, filing its report on January 3, 1995.

What did Starr do, after these four separate investigations were concluded? He devoted nearly three more years to studying Foster's death, and on October 10, 1997, he, too, released a report stating that Vincent Foster had indeed killed himself. Starr, like Fiske, may have felt compelled by the independent-counsel law to pursue the case, but certainly nothing forced him to take so long to reach his painfully obvious conclusion.

The law also establishes a very low threshold for assigning investigations to an independent counsel: the Attorney General must seek an independent counsel if there are "reasonable grounds to believe that further investigation is warranted." During the Clinton years, special prosecutors have been appointed to investigate four Cabinet members—Bruce Babbitt, Ron Brown, Henry Cisneros, and Mike Espy—as well as the President himself. Attorney General Reno will soon decide whether to appoint independent counsels to investigate Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman, in connection with alleged influence peddling. She may also open a joint investigation of the President and the Vice-President on the issue of campaign finance.

The vague reasonable-grounds clause has opened up the law to all kinds of partisan maneuvers. "Prosecutors in U.S. Attorneys' offices always reject some cases by saying they're not worth the time or effort," Cass Sunstein says. "But the law gives an independent counsel strong incentive to take minor or unprovable allegations seriously even though ordinary prosecutors would not give them the time of day." It was under this standard that Reno added Filegate and Travelgate to Starr's portfolio. (Congressional Republicans have pressured Reno, and she has been extremely reluctant to appear to be protecting the Clintons. In reference to approving investigations, she has said, "I'm damned if I do and damned if I don't.") Though Starr has made no formal announcement, he seems to have closed the Travelgate and Filegate inquiries without producing any criminal cases.

In Whitewater, though, there were real crimes to investigate, as the Tucker and McDougal convictions proved, and Starr's Washington office showed how prosecutors react to the accumulating frustrations of the long investigation of a single target—the usual scenario in independent-counsel investigations. The most dramatic affront to Starr came on January 4, 1996, when Hillary Clinton's personal secretary, Carolyn Huber, discovered the First Lady's billing records for her legal work on behalf of Madison Guaranty in the White House. The documents had been under subpoena for two years, and no one in the White House has ever offered a clear explanation for why they had not previously been found. The investigation of Mrs. Clinton was a special province of Starr's Little Rock office, which was led by an especially dogged prosecutor named Hickman Ewing. Now all Starr's prosecutors were furious.

Before the billing-records controversy, Starr avoided the spectacle of publicly summoning the President and the First Lady for questioning and instead examined them in private sessions at the White House. After the controversy, however, Starr forced Mrs. Clinton to testify at the Washington Federal Courthouse, on January 26, 1996. There was an even more dramatic confrontation behind the scenes. A Starr deputy named John Bates told Jane Sherburne, of the White House counsel's office, that Starr was planning to obtain a search warrant for the living quarters of the White House, to look for a box of documents relating to the Rose Law Firm. After heated negotiations, Bates agreed that Starr would not seek a search warrant—but in return for this concession Sherburne herself would have to do the search. So Sherburne crawled through every room in the residence, searching everywhere from the bathrooms to the underwear drawers. As required by the agreement with Starr's office, Sherburne even combed through Chelsea Clinton's possessions. "After I finished," Sherburne says, "I felt like standing in the shower." The White House lawyer never found what Starr was seeking.

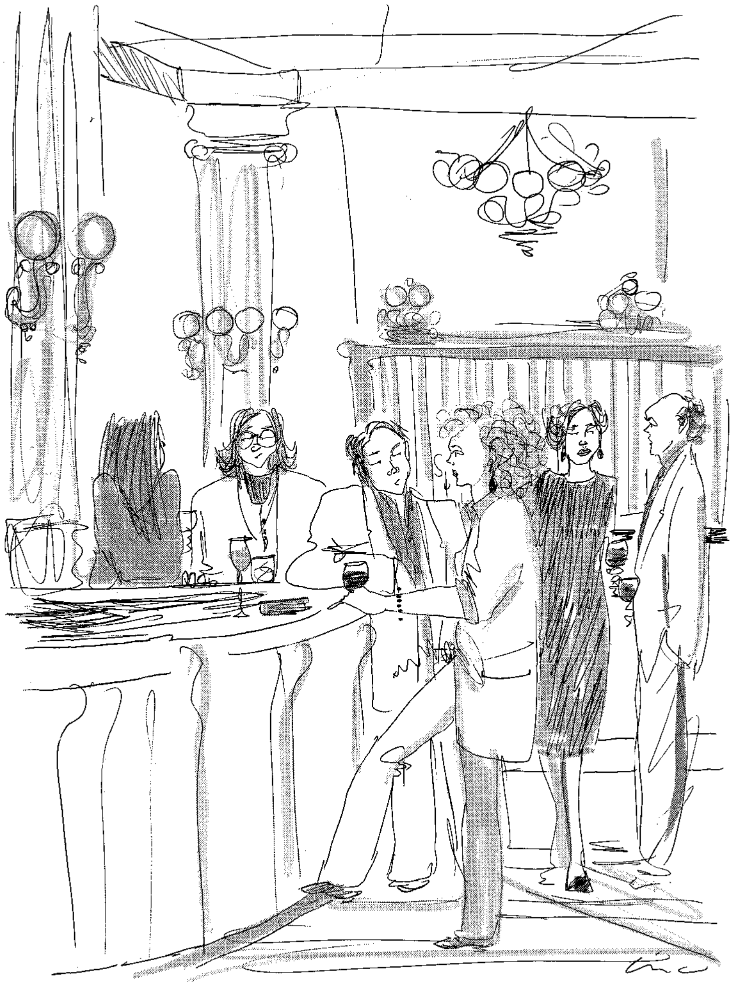
On November 5, 1996, Bill Clinton was reëlected after a campaign in which Starr's investigation figured hardly at all. By that time, Hubbell, Tucker, and the two McDougals had all pleaded guilty or been convicted, but their coöperation had proved either nonexistent or fruitless in getting closer to the Clintons. With the investigation stalled, the prosecutor tried to declare defeat. On February 17, 1997, shortly after Clinton was inaugurated for a second term, Starr announced that he would be stepping down to become dean of the Schools of Law and Public Policy at Pepperdine University, in Malibu, California.

The White House reacted with quiet satisfaction to the news that Starr was, in effect, surrendering, and decamping to a school of modest reputation, in a beach community known for starlets, bodybuilders, and surfers, to take a job partially financed by Richard Scaife. But the Republican right was outraged. In a typical example of conservative pique, William Safire declared that Starr had "brought shame on the legal profession by walking out on his client—the people of the United States." Four days later, Starr announced contritely that he had changed his mind about Pepperdine, and he promised to stay on until the end of the investigation. But by the end of 1997 many of Starr's most experienced prosecutors, including Roger Adelman, John Bates, and Mark Tuohey III, had left his staff. Starr was spending only about two days a week in the prosecution office, although he continued to supervise the work there. Preoccupied by the fresher scandal of campaign-finance abuses, the White House and the news media paid little attention to Starr's investigation throughout 1997. Then, on January 21, 1998, ABC News and the Washington *Post* reported that the independent counsel was investigating whether the President had suborned the perjury of Monica Lewinsky, a former White House intern, and otherwise obstructed justice in the Paula Jones sexual-harassment lawsuit.

JAY LENO and David Letterman, who had never been able to squeeze much out of the Whitewater lemon, now found themselves overwhelmed with juicy material. So did everybody else. Did Clinton and Lewinsky have an affair? Did Clinton lie about their relationship in his deposition in the Jones case? These questions were far more titillating than those about the financing of Arkansas real estate. But Starr's prosecutors were after something more than a sex angle. For years, they had believed that the Clinton Administration was orchestrating a coverup of Whitewater misdeeds—especially by buying the silence of such key conspirators as Webster Hubbell. Here, it seemed, the pattern was recurring. On January 12th, Linda Tripp came to Starr's office, suggesting that she had evidence that the President and Vernon Jordan had asked Lewinsky to lie about her relationship with Clinton, in a deposition in the Paula Jones case. What was more, Jordan had arranged to find Lewinsky a job, at Revlon. He had also, as Starr well knew, found lucrative, low-stress work for Hubbell, at Revlon's parent company, after his guilty plea, when Hubbell was supposed to be coöperating with Starr.

On hearing Tripp's story, what should Starr have done? He could have simply turned the information over to the Justice Department, on the ground that this subject was outside his jurisdiction. But Tripp's tale of potential obstruction of justice resembled areas already under Starr's purview. Besides, these prosecutors had been scorned and ignored for years. There was no way they were going to pass up a case as promising as this one. So Starr's team went after Lewinsky with gusto. White-collar-crime prosecutors believe in the taping of defendants as an article of faith; juries have come to expect tapes. If Starr was going to get Lewinsky—and flip her—taping her was the obvious place to start. So on January 13th Starr's investigators wired Tripp, hoping that Lewinsky would corroborate the charges. On January 14th, Lewinsky apparently gave Tripp the now famous "talking points," which appeared to encourage Tripp to offer false testimony in the Jones case. On January 16th, Reno agreed to Starr's request to authorize him to conduct a full investigation of obstruction of justice in the Jones case.

For the most part, Starr has conducted the investigation in the only way possible: he has summoned before the grand jury everyone who might have seen or heard of the relationship, including Lewinsky's fellow White House interns; Oval Office staffers; and Vernon Jordan and Betty Currie, the President's personal secretary, both of whom have been called to testify twice. There has been no mistaking, however, a certain swagger in Starr's approach to the Lewinsky case. His staff has investigated Lewinsky with an enthusiasm that borders on the unseemly. Starr made a debatable (though clearly legal) call in


"Am I a bad person if I don't care what happens to Yankee Stadium?"

summoning Marcia Lewis, Lewinsky's mother, before the grand jury. Likewise, the prosecutor's subpoenas to the Secret Service employees who guard the President raise troubling policy issues.

As Starr has upped the pressure in recent months, the President's allies have more than replied in kind. Some measure of the magnitude of Starr's task can be gauged in the events of a single twenty-four-hour span shortly after the Lewinsky story broke. Late on the night of Thursday, February 5th, the *Times* put a dramatic news story on its Web site, in advance of publication in Friday's paper. The story said that President Clinton had called Betty Currie into his office the day after he was deposed in the Paula Jones case and asked her a series of leading questions about his relationship with Lewinsky—questions like "We were never alone, right?" But, the story said, Currie told investigators that Clinton and Lewinsky had sometimes been alone. Moreover, Currie reportedly turned over to Starr's investigators several gifts—including a dress, a brooch, and a hatpin—that the President had given Lewinsky and that someone had deemed it prudent to retrieve.

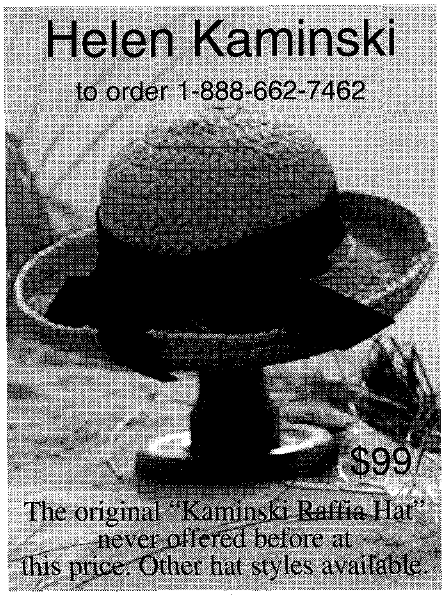
The *Times* story raised new questions about the President's behavior. Did he direct Betty Currie to retrieve the gifts? Did he attempt to persuade her to slant her recollection of his relationship with Lewinsky? (Currie's lawyers denied that he had.) Clinton's allies refused to address these questions; instead, they attacked the prosecutor. The following morning, the White House demonstrated its power to change the subject. Asked about the *Times* story on ABC's "Good Morning America," Paul Begala, a senior White House aide, said, "Let's find out who's behind these criminal leaks, and let's get to the bottom of that. Because someone wishes the President ill, and they are lying and leaking every day."

By midday on February 6th, John Conyers, Jr., the ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, had released a letter to Attorney General Janet Reno, requesting an "independent investigation into whether Mr. Starr and his office have illegally leaked grand jury evidence." By midafternoon, the President's personal lawyer, David Kendall, had held a rare news conference (in which he took no questions) and announced that he was asking the chief judge of the Washington Federal Court to investigate leaks by Starr's office. Kendall released a fifteen-page letter to Starr, which began, "The leaking by your office has reached an intolerable point." The three-pronged offensive—from the White House, Congress, and the President's legal team—worked magnificently. The leaks controversy dominated the news for the next several days; *Time* and *Newsweek* put the subject of leaks on their covers the following week.

Of course, no one but the *Times* knows if it was Starr's office that leaked the story. (The story attributed information only to "lawyers familiar with" Currie's statements to investigators.) Even so, the Administration's attack put Starr on the defensive and the substance of Betty Currie's testimony in the shadows. Last week, the White House tried to divert attention from its defeat on executive privilege by accusing Starr of leaking the ruling—even though it wasn't clear that the prosecutor had leaked it or that such a disclosure was improper.

NOTWITHSTANDING its recent court victories, Starr's team has made blunders that transcend mere spin. Two of the more egregious concern grand-jury subpoenas: one for the testimony of the White House aide and vocal Starr critic Sidney Blumenthal, the other for Monica Lewinsky's book-buying records at two Washington stores, Barnes & Noble and Kramerbooks. By hauling Blumenthal before a grand jury for talking to reporters and by ogling Lewinsky's reading list, Starr put himself at odds with the First Amendment. The Blumenthal subpoena brought him bipartisan criticism, and the bookstore subpoenas earned him a rebuke from the federal judge who supervises the Washington grand jury. On April 6th, Chief Judge Norma Holloway Johnson ruled that, under the First Amendment, she would quash the subpoenas unless Starr could specify what information he wanted from the bookstores and why.

These subpoenas share another, little-noticed connection. The same prosecutor examined Blumenthal before the grand jury and defended the bookstore subpoenas before Judge Johnson: the deputy independent counsel Robert Bittman, who is running the Lewinsky investigation on a day-to-day basis. Before Bittman joined Starr's office as a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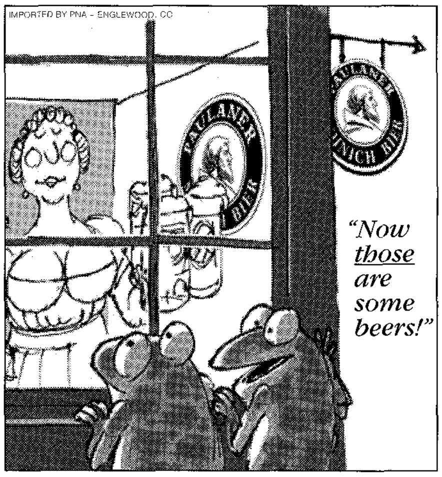
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junior prosecutor in 1994, at the age of thirty-two, he had never tried a federal case. His legal career consisted of six years as an assistant state attorney in Maryland's Anne Arundel County. According to his superiors there, Bittman prosecuted mainly street crime. In his most noteworthy case, he tried an Annapolis high-school teacher for having had consensual sex with one of her students. She was acquitted.

How did such an inexperienced lawyer come to lead an investigation of the President of the United States? Again, the answer lies in part with the independent-counsel law. Criminal investigations have customary life cycles, and veteran prosecutors are used to working on cases for a year or two at most. At one time, Starr's office was led by seasoned, admired Washington prosecutors, like Adelman, Bates, and Tuohey. But, as the years passed, these veterans went off to pursue more satisfying professional opportunities. A former member of Starr's staff told me, "The Washington office ebbed and flowed. The people who stayed did not have the same options as the people who left, but the people who stayed set the agenda."

Another person who stayed was Bittman's fellow deputy independent counsel, Jackie Bennett, Jr. Unlike Bittman, Bennett has considerable experience. But Bennett also has a reputation as an aggressive—some say reckless—prosecutor. As a lawyer with the Justice Department's Public Integrity Section during the early nineteen-nineties, he led a long investigation of purported corruption among prominent Democrats in Texas. After Bennett lost one case, the trial judge delivered an unusual rebuke, saying, "I really wish you'd take a message back to [the Justice Department] that we're not interested in wasting our time on rinky-dink cases." Because of episodes like this, Bennett was known to some colleagues as "the thug." In light of Bittman's and Bennett's records, Starr's oft-repeated statements of confidence in the "career prosecutors" on his staff raise questions about his candor and judgment.

THE critiques of independent counsels—from Walsh and Starr to smaller fry like Donald Smaltz, who is investigating former Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy, and Donald Barrett, who is prosecuting former H.U.D. Secretary Henry Cisneros—bear remarkable similarities. The prosecutors take too long, cost too much, and pursue their quarry with greater zeal than ordinary government lawyers. The legal establishment has soured on the independent-counsel law. "I testified in favor of the law when it was passed," Lloyd Cutler, who has served as counsel to Presidents Carter and Clinton, says. "The Saturday Night Massacre convinced a lot of us that we had something close to a coup d'état. But I've finally come around to thinking the cure is worse than the disease. Under this system, some of the independent counsels have become men on horseback. They turn it into a game of gotcha, and it just goes on forever." Cass Sunstein finds fault less with the independent counsels themselves than with the law that created them. "The problem is," he says, "you take any good lawyer and you tell him to work on one case to the exclusion of all others, and that lawyer will lose a sense of the whole picture." In the face of such criticism, it is now all but assured that the law will not be renewed by Congress when it expires in 1999.

But the hostility to independent counsels has become so widely shared that it obscures an important truth about them. They may be disliked personally, but their cases become an indelible part of the public record. The reputations of Oliver North and John Poindexter—and, in a way, of Ronald Reagan—will never recover from the Walsh investigation, even though the convictions of North and Poindexter were overturned on appeal. In a similar sense, Kenneth Starr still holds Bill Clinton's legacy in his hands.

Suppose that Starr brings a case against Monica Lewinsky for lying, during pretrial proceedings in the Paula Jones case, about her relationship with Bill Clinton. Such a prosecution would be greeted with outrage in many quarters, but there would be few legal obstacles to a trial. Indeed, the real message of the new Hubbell and McDougal charges may be that Starr is not afraid to bring unpopular prosecutions, as a Lewinsky case surely would be. In a Lewinsky trial, the chief witness for the prosecution would probably be Linda Tripp; the chief exhibits, her tapes. The lead defense witness would presumably be Bill Clinton, who would corroborate Lewinsky's denial that they had a sexual relationship, and then would undergo an unprecedented cross-examination. If Lewinsky is convicted, then Clinton is proved a liar.

The more likely scenario, though, is that in the next several months Starr will report his findings on the Lewinsky case to Congress. Given Starr's current unpopularity, it is the Republicans who now most fear public hearings in which they would, in effect, have to prosecute a popular President. A tendentious anti-Clinton screed would probably backfire against both Starr and the Republican Party. But Starr, the former judge and Solicitor General, knows how to write a persuasive brief. As a Clinton ally said to me recently, "If Starr lays it out so that there is no doubt that the President is lying about his relationship with Monica, what are the Democrats in Congress supposed to do? Are we going to expect everyone just to lie and say they believe the President?" Irrefutable evidence that the President lied under oath would certainly generate calls for Clinton to resign. No one who knows Clinton thinks he would heed such calls, and it is hard to imagine the House actually voting to impeach him, let alone two-thirds of the Senate voting to convict him. Nor is it clear that committing or suborning perjury about an adulterous affair in testimony given in a dismissed civil case (in which the testimony itself was excluded as irrelevant) qualifies as the sort of high crime or misdemeanor envisioned by the impeachment article of the Constitution. All the same, the effect on Clinton's place in history would be severe.

Lately, Starr has taken a few steps to repair his image. He has hired a public-relations adviser, Charles Bakaly III, who comes with the dubious credential of having spent the past few years as the spokesman for the independent counsel Donald Smaltz, who has received almost as much bad press as Starr. The prosecutor has also cut all ties to Pepperdine and thus to Scaife, though he perversely continues his private law practice. In the end, Starr's best P.R. strategy is probably to have none at all—to do his job in silence, sooner rather than later. The danger—and the opportunity—for both Starr and Clinton will be the same in this case as in any other confrontation between a prosecutor and his target: the winner is usually the one who has truth on his side. ♦

ANNALS OF DIPLOMACY

WHY ARE WE IN BOSNIA?

The road to American involvement was sometimes unmarked.

BY RICHARD HOLBROOKE

By 1995, as the crisis in Bosnia approached its climax, America's armed forces could look back proudly on the skill and courage with which they had handled a decade of challenges in Kuwait, Panama, Haiti, and elsewhere. But the memory of Vietnam still shadowed the Pentagon, which was now led by men who had served as company or field-grade officers in Southeast Asia. The lesson they drew from that experience was eloquently summarized by General Colin Powell, who wrote in his 1995 memoir, "Many of my generation, the career captains, majors, and lieutenant colonels seasoned in that war, vowed that when our turn came to call the shots, we would not quietly acquiesce in halfhearted warfare for half-baked reasons that the American people could not understand or support."

In addition, three post-Vietnam tragedies haunted the military: the failed attempt to rescue the American hostages in Teheran in 1980, which left eight Americans dead; the loss of two hundred and forty-one marines whose barracks in Beirut were bombed in 1983; and the firefight of October 3, 1993, when eighteen Americans, serving as part of a United Nations force in Somalia, were killed while trying to capture a clan leader. The wound from that most recent disaster was still fresh, and, together with the ghost of the much greater disaster a generation earlier, had saddled Washington's deliberations on Bosnia with what might be called a "Vietmalia syndrome."

To be sure, there were fundamental differences between Bosnia and "Vietmalia." The Bosnian Serbs were neither the disciplined, ruthless revolutionaries of North Vietnam nor the drunken, ragtag thugs who raced their "technicals" around Mogadishu, guns blazing. But discussion of such distinctions was unwelcome.

The author and the President in April, 1997, on a day that led to unexpected policy consequences.

WHITE HOUSE PHOTO

American military leaders were generally opposed to involvement in Bosnia. They feared that the mission would be "fuzzy"—imprecise, like the one in Somalia. Of course, General John Shalikashvili, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had made sure that the American military, if it should be ordered into action, would respond quickly and effectively. But the military regarded almost anything beyond self-protection and the carrying out of the military provisions of any peace agreement as constituting "mission creep"—that is, an undesirable broadening of their mission.

The United States, under both Presi-

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"Bear in mind that we just bought string bikinis."

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dents Bush and Clinton, had decided not to commit American soldiers to Bosnia. But there was a critical and little-noticed exception: President Clinton had pledged that American troops would support any massive withdrawal of the United Nations peacekeeping troops already stationed there. As the situation in Bosnia deteriorated dramatically in the spring of 1995, and many countries began talking openly of withdrawing from the peacekeeping force, NATO completed and formally approved a highly classified planning document that covered every aspect—from bridge-building to body bags—of the alliance's projected role in supporting a U.N. pullout. This plan, known as Operations Plan (or OPLAN) 40104, projected the participation of twenty thousand American soldiers.

In June of 1995, in my role as Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs, I asked for a briefing on the plan. After some initial Pentagon resistance, Air Force Lieutenant General Howell Estes III, the Pentagon operations director, came to my office and showed my deputies and me plans that left us stunned. As General Estes told us, it was bold and dangerous. American casualties, he warned, were virtually certain. To take such risks for a withdrawal, when we had not taken them to prevent "ethnic cleansing," seemed inconceivable to me.

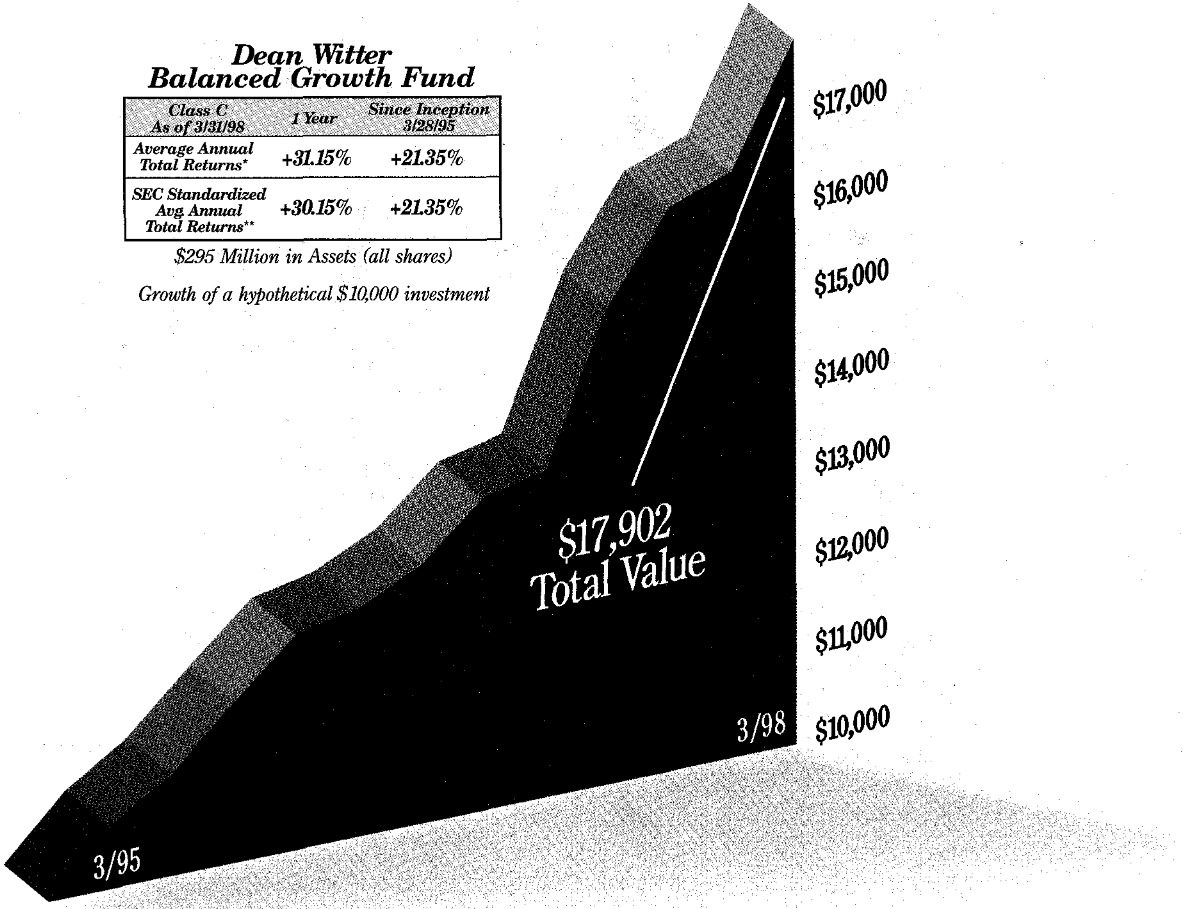
As soon as General Estes finished, I rushed to the office of Secretary of State Warren Christopher and urged him to get the same briefing. He did so the next day, and what he heard about OPLAN 40104 left him as worried as I was. But the status of the plan remained less than clear. According to complicated Cold War-era procedures that had never been tested, OPLAN 40104 would become an operational order, adjusted for specific circumstances, if a U.N. withdrawal started. Once that order was given, American troops would be deployed in the Balkans as part of a NATO force under an American commander. But, under our Constitution, only the President of the United States—not the NATO Council or any other international body—can decide to deploy American troops. And, despite the NATO Council's approval of the plan, the President had not approved it, or even been given a formal briefing on it.

U.N. withdrawal would open the way for the greatest disaster yet for the Bosnians. Sending American ground troops to fight the war was out of the question, but something had to be done, or else a Serb victory—and more "ethnic cleansing"—was inevitable. I had long favored NATO air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs, but that proposal had run into fierce opposition from parts of the government, and throughout Europe as well. What if we refused to assist our closest allies in a withdrawal from Bosnia? That, as the British and French told us bluntly, would be a transatlantic catastrophe. It was not an overstatement to say that America's post-Cold War role in Europe was at stake. It was a terrible set of choices, but it was clear that Washington could not avoid direct involvement much longer.

As we faced these dark prospects, Jacques Chirac arrived in Washington, on June 14, 1995, for his first visit as President of France. It was not for nothing that Chirac had acquired the nickname Le Bulldozer: he was as direct and blunt as his predecessor, François Mitterrand, had been opaque and elegant. He lost no time in threatening to withdraw French troops from Bosnia unless the United States got more deeply involved.

What happened that day has been described, in slightly different form, by Bob Woodward in "The Choice." Late in the morning, we held the "pre-brief," normally a routine session to prepare the President for an important visitor. It quickly degenerated into an angry, contentious discussion of Bosnia. The initial presentation seemed, in my view, misleading about the desperate nature of the situation, and especially about the likely consequences and complications of America's promise to assist a U.N. withdrawal. When I began to set forth the implications of OPLAN 40104, the President, obviously disturbed that he was receiving contradictory information so soon before his meeting with Chirac, cut me off. Vice-President Al Gore intervened with a pithy summation of the situation—the most accurate, in my view, at the meeting. Then, as people offered differing views, Christopher and I had to excuse ourselves, in order to go to the French Embassy, where Chirac was expecting us for lunch. In the car, Christopher and I, astonished at what had just happened, agreed that we had to talk to the President again as soon as possible about the true status of the NATO planning process.

The rest of the day was hectic. The President met alone with Chirac for



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well over an hour, instead of the scheduled twenty minutes, while Gore, Christopher, and half the American Cabinet waited in the Cabinet Room. The President asked Chirac to visit the Senate Majority Leader, Bob Dole, and the Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, hoping that the French President would be able to persuade the Republican leaders to give the Administration greater support on Bosnia. Chirac's meetings on the Hill, while cordial, changed nothing. He then returned to the White House for a small "family" dinner, which was spent, for the most part, in conversation about subjects other than Bosnia.

After Chirac left, I stood in the main entrance hall of the White House, in front of the North Portico, with Christopher, Samuel (Sandy) Berger, who was then the deputy national-security adviser, and Madeleine Albright, who was then the American Ambassador to the U.N. The President and the First Lady danced briefly to the music of a Marine Band ensemble that had played during dinner, and then they walked over to us. It was a beautiful June evening, and the White House glowed with its special magic. I looked at Christopher, concerned that we would lose the moment. He nodded. The President broke the ice. "What about Bosnia?" he asked suddenly, looking at me.

"I hate to ruin a wonderful dinner, Mr. President," I began, "but we should clarify something that came up during the day. I'm afraid that we may not have that much flexibility left. Under existing NATO plans, the United States is already committed to sending troops to Bosnia if the U.N. decides to withdraw."

"What do you mean?" the President asked me. "I'll decide the troop issue if and when the time comes."

There was silence for a moment. "Mr. President," I said, "NATO has already approved the withdrawal plan. While you can always stop it, it has a high degree of automaticity built into it, especially since we have committed ourselves publicly to assisting the NATO troops if they decide to withdraw."

The President looked at Christopher. "Is this true?" he asked.

"Yes, it appears to be," Christopher said tersely.

"I suggest that we talk about it again tomorrow," the President said, and he walked off without another word, holding Mrs. Clinton's hand.

THE next day, as he flew to Halifax for a G-7 summit, the President began to press for better options; he understood that sending troops to Bosnia to implement a failure was unacceptable. But events in Bosnia were moving faster than the policy-review process in Washington. While the Administration deliberated, the Bosnian Serbs went on the attack again. This time, their actions would horrify the world.

General Ratko Mladic, the commander of the Bosnian Serb Army, now focussed pressure on three isolated Muslim enclaves in eastern Bosnia—Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde—that had been completely surrounded by Serb forces since early in the war. A small number of U.N. peacekeepers had been sent to each enclave, but they had been bottled up, unable to relieve the siege conditions of the three towns. Mladic decided to eliminate the enclaves from the map.

On July 6, 1995, his forces began shelling Srebrenica. What took place over the next ten days was the biggest single mass murder in Europe since the Second World War. The outside world did nothing effective to stop the tragedy. Precise details of the atrocities were not known at the time, but there was no doubt that something truly horrible was going on. By coincidence, I soon had an additional source of information about Srebrenica beyond the official reporting: my younger son, Anthony, who was twenty-five, had gone to Tuzla that week to help interview refugees. Anthony had been working in a refugee camp in Thailand when the president of Refugees International, Lionel Rosenblatt, summoned him to Bosnia. Anthony and Rosenblatt arrived in central Bosnia just as the first, desperate survivors from Srebrenica and Zepa reached the safety of the Muslim-controlled airfield outside Tuzla. They were joined by two key State Department officials: John Shattuck, the Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, and Phyllis Oakley, the Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees, and Migration.

Together, the four of them interviewed shell-shocked survivors of Srebrenica, and heard the stories that would soon horrify the world: how the Serbs, directed by General Mladic, had rounded up all the Muslims in the town and piled them into buses; how most of the men were never seen again; how people were herded onto soccer fields and school grounds and killed in large numbers; how men in the thousands were still trying to escape through the woods toward Tuzla.

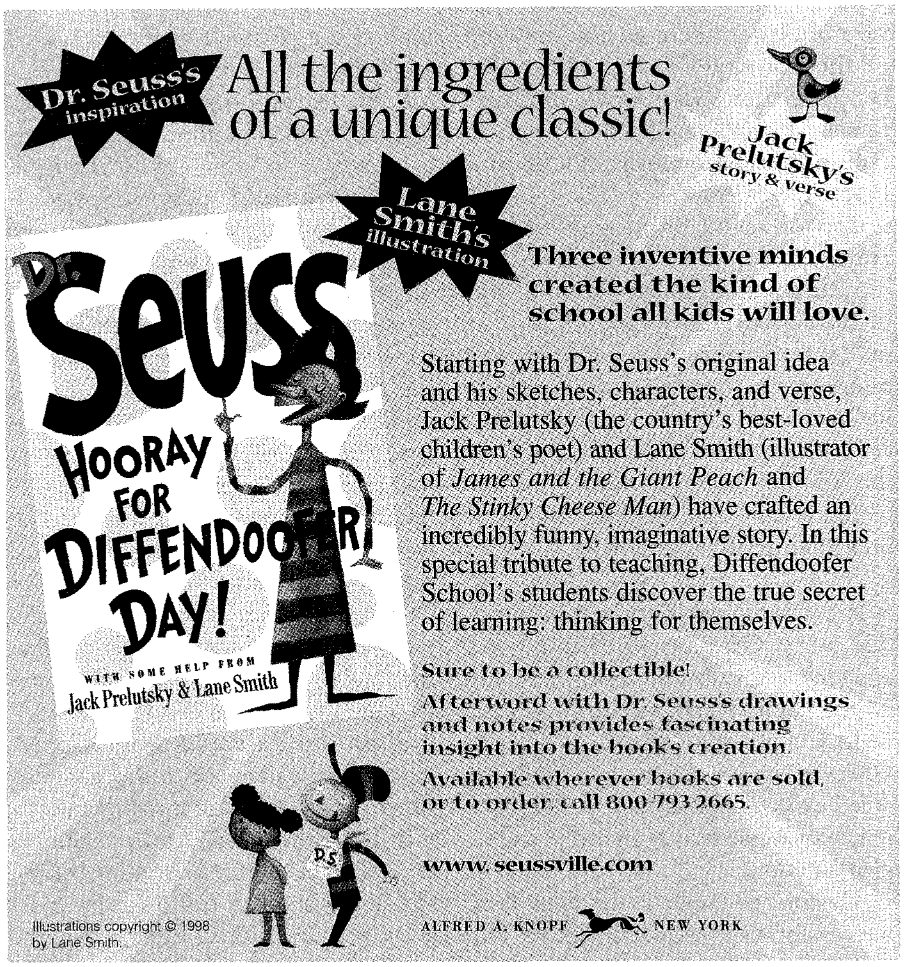
On July 13th, as the Serbs were systematically killing Muslims, President Chirac called President Clinton. He said that something had to be done, and proposed that American helicopters carry French troops into Srebrenica to relieve the town. This proposal had already been discussed through official French channels, and had run into fierce opposition from the British and the Pentagon and also from Chirac's own generals. It had no chance of being accepted.

No more energy was left in the international system. Everywhere one turned, there was numb confusion in the face of the Bosnian Serbs' brutality. The first line of opposition to any air strike against the Serbs—which I recommended—was the Dutch government, which refused to consider air strikes until all its soldiers were out of Bosnia. Through every channel available, in London, Paris, and NATO headquarters, we pressed for some response, but the Europeans had reached their limits: with their own soldiers at risk, they were not going to agree to any action that endangered the Dutch. The Serbs knew this, and held the bulk of the Dutch forces captive in the U.N. compound at the nearby village of Potocari until their own forces had finished their dirty work at Srebrenica. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the toll of Muslims dead or missing and presumed dead in Srebrenica was seven thousand three hundred. Most of the victims had been unarmed, and almost all had died in ambushes and mass executions. Nothing else in the war had matched, or ever would match, Srebrenica. The name would become part of the language of the horrors of modern war, alongside Lidice, Oradour, Babi Yar, and the Katyn Forest.

THE destruction of Srebrenica was an enormous shock to the Western alliance, and to the conscience of the West. President Clinton pressed his national-security team once again to make an all-out effort to bring peace to Bosnia. As a result, in early August of 1995, after more bureaucratic twists, a last-ditch diplomatic effort was launched, which I was asked to lead. Less than a week into that effort, three of the four members of our negotiating team—Robert Frasure, Joseph Kruzel, and Nelson Drew—were killed when their vehicle, travelling some fifty yards behind mine, slipped off the narrow and dangerous Mt. Igman road as we tried to reach Sarajevo, the besieged capital of Bosnia.

The deaths of these three highly respected and treasured colleagues wrenched the Washington policy discussions into focus. And then—on August 28, 1995, the day our newly reconstituted team resumed the diplomatic shuttle—the Bosnian Serbs killed some thirty-eight people in the Sarajevo marketplace with a single mortar shell. It was, at last, an outrage too far. Within forty-eight hours, under urging from President Clinton and with strong support from our negotiating team, NATO finally did what it should have done years earlier: it launched massive air strikes against Bosnian Serb positions.

Events now accelerated dramatically. We negotiated a lifting of the siege of Sarajevo in mid-September and a general ceasefire in early October. On November 1, 1995, at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, outside Dayton, Ohio, we convened a risky, all-or-nothing peace conference involving all three Balkan Presidents and senior diplomatic representatives from Russia, Great Britain, France, Germany, and the European Union. For twenty-one days, we cajoled, harassed, and pressured the participants, coming to the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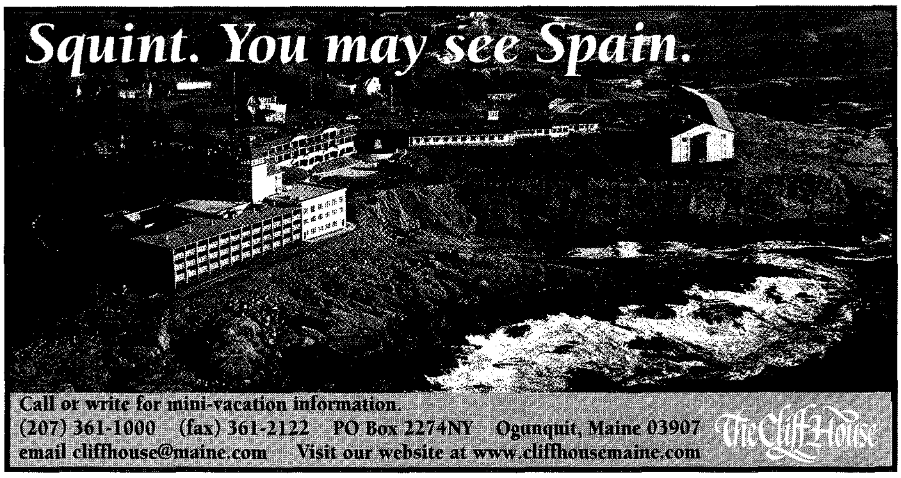
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very brink of failure on the morning of the last day. Finally, on November 21st, after a last-minute intervention by President Clinton, the three Balkan Presidents initialled the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Dayton marked a turning point in America's post-Cold War role in Europe. It put an end not only to the war in Bosnia but also to several years of widespread concern that the United States was in the process of turning its back on Europe. Even America's harshest critics acknowledged that without the Administration's leadership the war would have ended disastrously—and only after much more carnage.

BUT Dayton was not the end of the story. On paper, it was a good agreement: it called for a single, multiethnic country and a central government. Countless diplomatic agreements, however, survive only as case studies in failed expectations. Dayton's true place in history would be determined by its implementation.

Dayton's first military deadlines were met easily, and without incident. The first major civilian deadline of the Dayton agreement—and in many ways the most important—was the unification of Sarajevo, which took place on schedule, on March 19, 1996. But on the eve of that achievement the Bosnian Serbs exploited the passivity of the NATO-led Implementation Force, or IFOR, to reassert themselves. Two weeks before Sarajevo's scheduled unification, in a cynically brutal act designed to reinforce ethnic partition, the Bosnian Serb leadership began to order all Serbs in the Sarajevo area—some forty thousand or more—to burn down their own apartments and leave the city. Detailed instructions were broadcast on how to set the fires: pile all the furniture in the middle of the room, douse it with kerosene, turn the gas on, and throw a match into the room as you leave. Often, those Sarajevo Serbs who resisted were beaten by Serb thugs who roamed the streets, while NATO troops stood by. The result was a severe blow to the multi-ethnic country called for at Dayton, and it would take more than sixteen months to undo the damage.

Even when a President is reëlected, his Administration goes through a transition period, although it may be mostly invisible to the public. At the beginning of 1997, the Clinton Administration effected a smooth transition in most areas, and especially at State, where the new Secretary, Madeleine Albright, was familiar with the major issues from her U.N. tour, and on the National Security Council, where Sandy Berger simply moved up to replace Tony Lake as national-security adviser. (Although I had left the government in February of 1996 to return to private life in New York, I would continue to work closely with the Administration on Bosnia, returning three times to assist my former colleagues.)

At State, Albright's well-known tough line on Bosnia made her the ideal person to reinvigorate the policy. Nonetheless, by April of 1997 there was a general impression that "Clinton II" was downgrading Bosnia; the emphasis in Europe was almost entirely on a critical summit meeting with Boris Yeltsin, planned for Helsinki, that would determine the future of the Administration's plan to enlarge NATO. Sensing that high-level American interest had declined, Radovan Karadzic, the indicted war criminal who had founded the Bosnian Serb Republic, ventured once more into public view, flagrantly violating a July 18, 1996, agreement he had negotiated with me, in which he had pledged to withdraw "permanently" from public life. His reëmergence went unchallenged by NATO, and suggested, as many journalists noted, that NATO was simply counting the days until its forces left. But as soon as the Helsinki summit ended successfully, with Yeltsin's acceptance of a larger NATO, President Clinton focussed again on Bosnia, ordering a full-scale review of American policy.

At about that time, Liz Stevens gave a combined birthday party in honor of her husband, the filmmaker George Stevens, Jr., and my wife, the writer Kati Marton—a party that would have unexpected policy consequences. On arriving early, we found Secret Service agents all over the house. Without telling us, Liz had invited the Clintons, and a few minutes later, ahead of the other guests, they walked in.

To be precise, Hillary walked; the President limped in, on crutches. A month earlier, he had taken a nasty fall outside the home of the golfer Greg Norman. As it happened, I had injured myself at about the same time, tearing ligaments in my ankle, and I, too, was on crutches. We spent a few minutes comparing our rehabilitation programs. As he left, the President pulled me aside for a moment and said, "Come by tomorrow and we can do some therapy and talk."

The next day, I presented myself at the White House and was ushered up-

Born - 80 DOW
Died - 9,000 DOW
D. Reilly

stairs to the family quarters, where I found the President pedalling away on a stationary bicycle. We worked out together in silence for a while. Then we adjourned to another room to cool down. Members of the family, including Hillary and her mother, Dorothy Rodham, stopped to chat. Just as I was starting to wonder if we would ever get around to talking about Bosnia, the President said, "Let's go downstairs." With that, we hobbled down to his office in the family quarters.

"What's going on out there?" the President began. It is in the nature of the hierarchical structure of the executive branch that a conversation like the one we then proceeded to have—informal, candid, and alone—would have been next to impossible while I was still in the government; there are simply too many layers between an assistant secretary and the Chief Executive. I had decided, at the enthusiastic urging of Strobe Talbott, to be as frank as I could. I listed the series of reverses and lost opportunities since December.

"While NATO enlargement and your achievement with Yeltsin have been historic, Bosnia has gone nowhere," I said. "These issues are interrelated. People out there are not even sure we still support Dayton, or still care what happens in Bosnia."

I URGED the President to give his full backing to Albright and Robert Gelbard, a career diplomat whom Albright had chosen to be the "czar" for implementation of Dayton. I had first asked Gelbard, a tough, no-nonsense official, to visit Bosnia at the end of 1995. His assumption, in April of 1997, of full-time responsibility for implementing the Dayton agreement would soon produce results, and he and I would make a productive trip to the region together in August of 1997 to accelerate the process.

When the President visited Sarajevo, last December, he said that implementation was running about a year behind schedule—a judgment that coincided with my own. But the situation in Bosnia has greatly improved. There has been no fighting for two years; the three communities have begun rebuilding ties at the local level; Sarajevo, reunified, is rebuilding; large quantities of weapons have been destroyed; four airports have opened for civilian traffic; numerous refugee "open cities" have been created; the odious Bosnian Serb television transmitters, once Karadzic's greatest asset, have finally been seized by NATO and turned over to broadcasters who are not preaching race hate; Banja Luka, the center of a new, more moderate Serb leadership, has grown in strength. And all this has been done without a single NATO soldier's being killed or wounded by hostile action since Dayton.

In January, a new moderate Bosnian Serb, Milorad Dodik, was named Prime Minister of the Serb portion of Bosnia, and pledged full compliance with the Dayton agreement. When the Karadzic forces threatened a coup against him, NATO moved rapidly, in a manner not previously seen, to head off the threat. If such actions continue, the anti-Dayton forces will be progressively weakened, and the chances of creating a viable multi-ethnic state will improve dramatically.

Still, while the blood lust of 1991-95 has subsided, it is not gone; people on all sides carry deep scars, and many continue to seek revenge instead of reconciliation. Most troubling, the same leaders who started the war are still trying to silence those who call for multi-ethnic coöperation. The two most dangerous men in the region, the indicted war criminals Karadzic and Mladic, remain at large more than two years after Dayton.

If the United States does not lead, its European allies could falter as they did in the early part of this decade. Indeed, since earlier this year, the old pattern has threatened to repeat itself; in Kosovo, an Albanian Muslim region in Serbia, Serbian police have cracked down on ethnic Albanians. This time, though, the United States immediately condemned the aggressors, and Secretary of State Albright called for fresh sanctions against Belgrade. "We will keep all options open to do what is necessary to prevent another wave of violence from overtaking the Balkans," she said in March. As Kosovo reminded us, there will be other Bosnias in our lives. ♦

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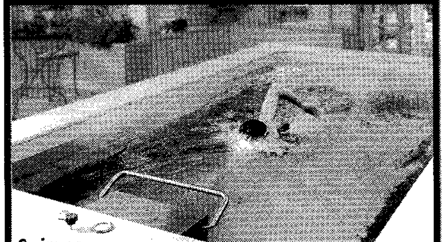

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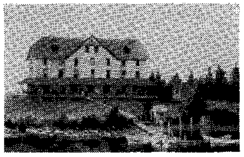

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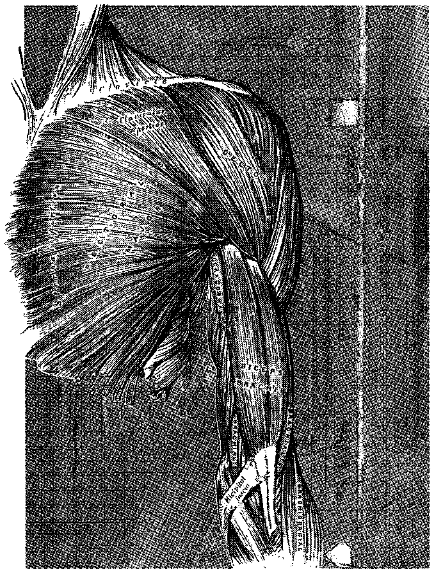
THE SPORTING SCENE

WINGS OF FIRE

Why are young big-league pitchers (and older ones, too) breaking down in such expensive and excruciating numbers?

BY ROGER ANGELL

PITY the pitchers. Fences in the new ballparks have crept closer; weight work and nutritional supplements and steroids are beefing up the batters to Schwarzeneggerian proportions, while the strike zone, as called by umpires bending low to follow the down-dropping split-finger pitch, has shrivelled to doily size, with its bottom hem almost at ankle level, exactly where the hitters want it. Mark McGwire, the Cardinals' pink-bearded basher, may have struck the tonal chord for this young 1998 season when he rapped a home run in each of his team's first four games. (Only Willie Mays had ever done this before.) Or was it Junior Griffey hitting a pair of two-run homers in two successive games against the Red Sox?


The human shoulder is complex—and was not designed to throw fastballs.

If the sport has needed a balancing figure to represent the other side of things—the sweating, embattled view from the mound, that is—it has found him, cast in bronze, in the person of Bret Saberhagen, a fourteen-year veteran right-hander who began this season for the Red Sox in brisk fashion, rushing off to a 4–0 record in his first four starts, with a league-leading 1.96 earned-run average. Saberhagen has been a known high-quality performer, to be sure, winning two Cy Young Awards while with the Royals in the eighties, but all this appeared to have ended for him three years ago, when, pitching for the Colorado Rockies, he blew out his shoulder in devastating fashion, severing a group of ligaments collectively known as the capsule—a horrific pitching injury never previously encountered in the profession. David Altchek, a distinguished New York orthopedist who also serves as team physician to the Mets, performed a complex two-hour restorative surgery but warned Saberhagen, who is thirty-four, not to expect to resume his career. Saberhagen would have none of that, and now, after two years of almost unimaginable rehabilitation, he has come back all the way, and then some. His triumph makes a point not only about athletic perseverance but about the hazards and chronic anxieties that afflict all pitchers these days—their rising numbers on the disabled list, an across-the-board increase in arm and shoulder breakdowns and surgeries, the postponed or cancelled careers of some once-promising rookie flingers, and the departure of so many worn-down older mound stars from their accustomed place in the middle of things.

The list of high-priced surgical patients restored to action this season also includes Hideo Nomo, the Dodger fireballer, who was pitching again after an off-season elbow operation; David Cone, who had shoulder repairs for the second time in two years; and John Smoltz, of the famously durable Braves rotation, who had bone chips and calcium deposits removed from his elbow. Others were not so lucky. On almost every morning during spring training, those little agate lines in the back columns of the sports pages would carry

MICHAEL CRAWFORD; DIAGRAM © WILLIAMS & WILKINS

pitching news that made you wince or sigh. Bryan Harvey, a nine-year relief ace with the Angels and the Marlins, threw one pitch, felt something pop in his surgically repaired shoulder, and ended his comeback on the spot. Roger McDowell, a redoubtable reliever and charmer, once of the Mets, announced his retirement after undergoing three shoulder surgeries in the past two years, while the towering Ben McDonald, once a local hero in Baltimore, was released by the Brewers after a nine-year career replete with injuries and rehabs. And Jose Rijo, a fiery M.V.P. in the 1990 World Series, who has endured five arm and shoulder operations in the past three years, got an O.K. from the Reds to start throwing again, but *carefully*. When Opening Day came along, there were forty-four officially disabled pitchers on the team rosters, with most of them in various degrees of recovery from elbow or shoulder invasions.

Pitchers everywhere were talking about their arms this spring. Jeff Brantley, an exuberant reliever whom I encountered just after he had thrown in a little B-game for the Cardinals at their new camp, in Jupiter, Florida, happily waggled his ice-bagged arm for me, because last year he could barely use it. His forty-four saves for the Reds tied for most in the National League in 1996, but he hurt too much after that to keep up. When Dr. James Andrews, a celebrated orthopedic surgeon in Birmingham, Alabama, opened his shoulder last June, he determined that Brantley had been pitching with a torn labrum (a shoulder cartilage) for at least the past five years.

"When you go out to pitch, you *pitch*," Brantley told me. "You can throw through soreness—I pitched great. There's a certain amount of uncomfortability that you're going to have to overcome. The amount of damage you do depends on how long you're going to get the money and how much money you're going to get. When the ninth inning comes along, you just go out there and suck it up. My arm was sore, it hurt front and back, and when the time came when I couldn't throw anymore I knew it was time to go for surgery. I couldn't move it at all. It would get out to here"—he pointed in midair, as if hailing a cab—"and just stop." He laughed.

Al Leiter, the dashing thirty-two-year-old lefty starter who came over to the Mets this year, told me that there was pain and then there was normal soreness. He should know: he is a hard thrower who runs up a lot of strikeouts and bases on balls. Last fall, he started the seventh game of the World Series for the Florida Marlins and fanned seven batters while holding the Indians to two runs; the Marlins won the classic in eleven innings.

"There are times now that I'm older when I feel a twinge or two," Leiter said, "but you just block that out. You've gotta get that man out, you know. You can't walk off the mound."

What was normal soreness, I wanted to know.

"Normal soreness comes the day you pitch and the day after. It's achy-sore. It feels like somebody punched you in the arm about fifty times."

I had to talk to Rick Honeycutt by phone: he was home in Tennessee this spring—out of baseball, after twenty years in the majors. He is a left-hander, with a ducking screwball, and for the past decade he had been a highly respected late-innings specialist; he appeared in eighteen post-season games for the successful 1988-92 Oakland Athletics. With the Cardinals last year, he was sidelined for the entire season, and after he decided to hang up his spikes he underwent surgery to prepare him for everyday life: a ligament transplant in his left elbow that would free him up to open doors, drive a car, and play a little golf again.

Honeycutt paused when I asked how many operations he had required in all. "Let's see," he said. "Maybe it's four—you sort of lose track. Most shoulder surgeries are only for wear and tear. But I was a sinker-slider guy and I threw it both ways." He meant that he rotated his wrist clockwise in mid-pitch, which is natural for lefties, and also rotated it to the left—the screwball delivery, which is not. "I was torquing it from the inside out and also from the outside in, and that's hard on your arm."

As I pressed Honey for details—I was beginning to feel like another resident on "E.R."—he seemed anxious to assure me that he hadn't been hurting every day. "I lived on medication pretty much," he said. "I took anti-inflammatories like Indocin and Volteran—you can't mix those with Advil, you know—and maybe some cortisone

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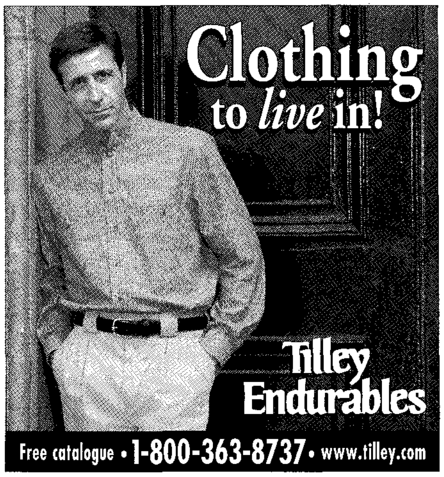

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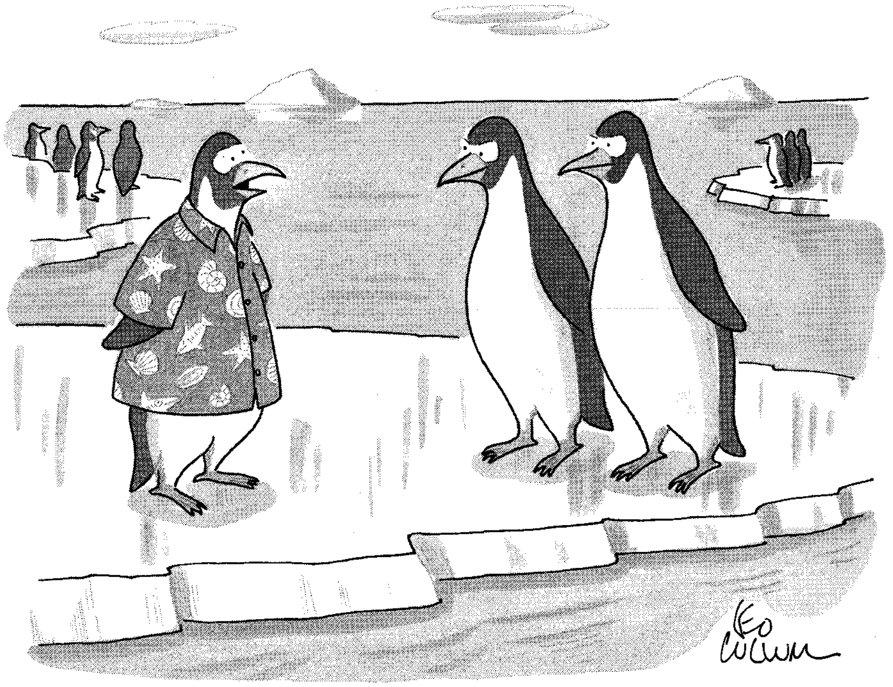
now and then. One year I think I had seven or eight cortisone shots."

Honeycutt spoke without bitterness or irony; none of the pitchers I talked to sounded surprised about their travails. He was missing the game a great deal—"having my withdrawal," as he put it—and Brantley, as I have noted, had been ecstatic to be back throwing again. When I suggested to Al Leiter that his was one of the few million-dollar professions that could end without warning, in the space of a single pitch, he agreed. "The only parallel," he offered, "would be going down in a corporate helicopter crash."

The rap on present-day pitchers is that they don't work often enough, don't stay out there very long, can't throw strikes, and won't cut loose with the fastball; they also break down, get too much money, listen only to their agents, and aren't anything like our memories of Ol' (fill in blank), who threw eight or nine innings every fourth day, and lasted with the home club for twenty years. Those were the days.

Well, maybe. Baseball is never as simple as we think it has been, and the present arms crisis is stuffed with more than the usual paradoxes and contradictions. One general manager told me that he wonders whether the pitchers aren't throwing the same number of pitches over their lifetimes that they used to but in a different pattern: far fewer while they're growing up, and a lot more later, when better conditioning and high salaries keep them on in the game. Yes, pitchers pitch in a five-man rotation now, and expect to go five or maybe six innings per start; and relievers have specialties, which include long and middle relief, setup man, and closer. They are not failed or second-level starters, as they were in the old days, I mean; most of them have been working at their own quirky line since high school. Everyone in baseball is aware of Greg Maddux and Tom Glavine and Smoltz and the rest of that fabulously successful Braves rotation, but it was the 1996 World Champion Yankees who established once again that a deep and various relief corps can be as important as the guys you start with. What this means in psychic terms is that all the pitchers—starters, relievers, closers—expect to go at top gear all the time.

What you notice on the tube in so many games nowadays is that the mild old situations of baseball have become claustrophobic, and that the pitchers appear to be working in a condition of prolonged semi-crisis. They attack that little strike zone with fastballs—sometimes up in the nineties on the clock—and also lean heavily upon the high-risk slider (high risk for arms, that is) and a variety of other pitches as well, which they try not to throw for strikes, in the hope that the batter will make an out on a pitch he should have left alone. The split-finger fastball and the circle change—so called because it's thrown with the pitcher's forefinger and thumb making a circle (the traditional "O.K." sign)—are the current flings du jour. Many of these diving, pausing sorts of pitches will be taken for a ball, or nubbed or bonked for a foul, running up the count, slowing the game, and making the middle-aged fan long for Tom Seaver's or Vida Blue's old high-riding fastball through the upper story of the strike zone.



"You're kidding. I thought it was Friday."

Those days won't come back. David Cone, the Yankee ace, told me that he'd been watching videos of old-time games and had been amazed by the way pitchers looked then. "That real high leg kick, the fluid motion, the higher mounds, the higher strike zone—why, Yogi Berra was almost standing up, it looked like," he said. "All that had such an impact on how pitchers pitched."

The mound was lowered from its official fifteen inches to ten after the 1968 season, in order to cheer up the hitters: that was the year Bob Gibson put together an earned-run average of 1.12 in the National League and only one hitter, Carl Yastrzemski, reached the .300 level in the American. Cone describes the present strike zone as being side-to-side, when it used to be up-and-down, and believes that the lower mound requires pitchers to risk arm damage as they stride out and reach out farther in their deliveries in order to move the ball within its low target area. "That's got to be more stress on your joints," he said. Other pitchers agree, including Rick Honeycutt, who also believes that many contemporary mounds aren't properly kept up or given the ideal front slope, with the same detrimental result that Cone mentioned. Honeycutt's solution to the aching-arm syndrome is to have the leagues appoint Nolan Ryan to the post of official mound supervisor. "Wherever Nolan went, the mounds were great," he said.

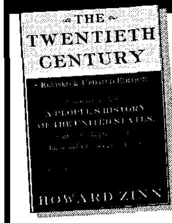
The typical young pitcher (call him Tip) out there right now is bigger than Tom Seaver or Vida Blue, and is possibly in better shape than they were; he works all year round at his isometrics and stretching exercises, his light-weights regimen and elastic-tube repetitions (which will build up the rotator cuff to resist injury). He is looked after by a corps of professional trainers, dietitians, and orthopedists unimagined twenty years ago, who have recourse to a battery of expensive weight machines, digitalized images of Tip in action (a stick figure pitching on the screen, seen from above, from in front, from the side), and the magnetic-resonance-imaging machine, which is the critical resource of contemporary sports medicine. Tip is a valuable property, and he knows it. He wants nothing to do with the good old days; he has heard those horror stories, even from some of the older pitchers on his own team, and he has seen the zipper-like, monster scars on the shoulders and chests and elbows of some of his team's immortals as they were changing into their uniforms before Old Timers' Day.

I know the stories, too; I've heard them everywhere this spring. Ben McDonald, pitching at the age of seventeen for his Louisiana high-school team in a state semifinal, threw two hundred and ten pitches in a fourteen-inning game; the next afternoon, he was summoned back in relief in the third inning. In 1989, Al Leiter, then a Yankee, threw a hundred and sixty-two pitches at the Stadium against the Twins on a cold April night; Leiter says his manager, Dallas Green, told him that he'd wanted to "stretch him out" a little. Leiter broke down in his second start after that, and underwent rotator-cuff surgery in early September. "He stretched me out, all right," Leiter said to me in Florida. Doc Gooden, no longer the free-throwing Lochinvar of that glorious 24–4 season in 1985, was kept in a chilly afternoon Mets game against the Expos in April of 1991 (I was there) for more than a hundred and forty pitches; the Mets' manager, Bud Harrelson, explained that he had kept Gooden in the game because he was still at full velocity. Doc required labrum and rotator-cuff repairs early in September, and did not pitch again that year. There is darker stuff as well—whispers of gothic hurts which skim about the clubhouse like wraiths. Gil Patterson, a legendary fastballing prospect with the Yankees in the mid-seventies, had eight operations on his pitching arm, then turned around and learned to throw left-handed; in the tale, he got it up to 85 m.p.h. on the gun from that side but unaccountably had trouble with his control.

Tip is lucky, because his manager and general manager certainly aren't going to risk his future on a single big-game stretch-out (except, just possibly, with some club, late in September or early in October, in a set of innings that his team really needs to win to stay in this particular playoff chase or championship playoff or—wow!—the World Series at last). And if Tip should run into hard times and feel something sharp and nasty chewing at his shoulder or his elbow—an insult confirmed and clarified by the M.R.I.—the surgery he receives will be swift and expert and, in all likelihood, arthroscopic: a little window-hole fix-up or clean-out to ward off more serious trouble down the line.

Good, but why does Tip break down at all? Why, just two years ago, did all three of the Mets' arriving prodigy pitchers—Jason Isringhausen, Paul Wilson, and Bill Pulsipher—come crashing down with disabling injuries? Why did an equally spectacular rookie foursome of the early nineties—the Athletics' Todd Van Poppel, Don Peters, Kirk Dressendorfer, and David Zancanaro, first-round draft choices all—come to so little in the majors? Where are the Bob Fellers and Warren Spahns and Bob Gibsons of this generation? Where's the next Roger Clemens or Nolan Ryan coming from? How do they differ from Tip, over there, icing his arm in front of his locker?

They were older, for one thing—in years or in bodies, or both—when they made it up to the show. Feller, it's true, was only seventeen when he joined the Indians, in 1936, and began vaporizing American League batters, but he had come straight off his father's farm in Van Meter, Iowa, and already had the physique of a field hand. Bob Gibson, a great athlete, played for the Harlem Globetrotters before he got to the Cardinals. Spahn went off to the Army in 1943 and didn't pitch his first full year for the Boston Braves until he was twenty-six. Nolan Ryan had put in more than five hundred innings, over five seasons, by the time he turned twenty-five, but it was late in the day before he got that powerful and elegant motion put together—"beautiful mechanics," in the parlance—and began



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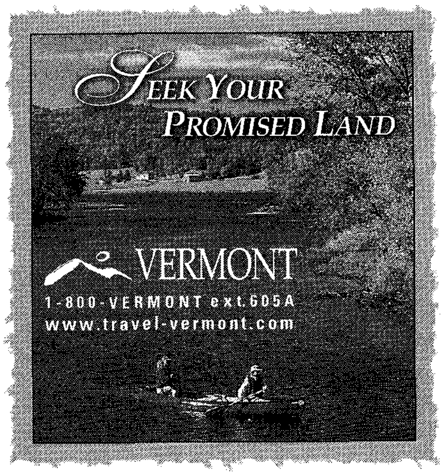

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FAIRY TALES

"I think he's finally asleep."

• •

striking out three hundred batters a year (and walking two hundred more) for the Angels. Roger Clemens—well, Roger is a tree. (Just stand next to him: you'd need to count rings.) All these past and imminent Hall of Famers had powerful legs as well as powerful arms—legs you wouldn't believe if you'd grown up in a mall, like today's strong, frail athletes.

I have heard gruff old scouts complain that today's young pitchers would never be capable of the brutal self-punishment of a Clemens, who rebuilt himself in amazing fashion before the 1997 season, his fourteenth in the majors, in preparation for his 21–7 year with the Blue Jays and a fourth Cy Young, or of a Steve Carlton, the dominating recent Phillies left-hander, who used to twist his arm repeatedly in a container filled with uncooked rice as a means of keeping his forearm tuned up to the demands of his killer slider, but this charge feels unfair. No, where the newcomers fall short, through no fault of their own, is in athletic ability. There simply aren't enough prime arms to go around: thanks to expansion, there are at least a hundred and fifty pitchers now on big-league rosters who would otherwise be toiling in the semi-obscurity of the minors. Meantime, the always limited number of teen-age genius athletes—the same Superbods who once went only into professional baseball—can contemplate a vastly expanded sports market, where fabulous careers in football, basketball, hockey, tennis, golf, track and field, and, yes, soccer are also available to them. Only a handful of them still pick the old pastime.

BOTH the Athletics and the Mets have given intense thought to the multiple setbacks of their celebrated young hopefuls, and although the soul-searchings continue, neither club has been able to find a flaw in its over-all program. Rather, each came to the conclusion that some of these great prospects had arrived with prior damage to their arms, or were at deep risk because of inbred awkwardnesses in their deliveries—poor mechanics. These young men were treated with extravagant care, but, like so many of their contemporaries, they missed the standard five or six years' seasoning in the minors that they could have expected a few decades ago. Most players who make it to the majors now get there after two or three years in minor-league ball at best, where, if they are pitchers, they have been handled with particular tenderness. When they reach the majors, they find themselves under the gun, with unpredictable results. The A's president, Sandy Alderson, pointed out to me that the risk actually goes up if they are extremely talented, because great young pitchers who get to throw a lot of major-league innings when they are in their early twenties are the ones most likely to suffer a career-ending or altering serious injury—Doc Gooden and Fernando Valenzuela, for instance. Indeed, he said, projecting the fate of brilliant young pitchers, who are scouted everywhere while they're still in high school, has become so chancy that more and more clubs are passing them up in the early rounds of the draft, because of the breakdowns and the money wasted in their signing and development.

Those three young Mets suffered different turns of ill fortune, for reasons beyond anyone's control. Isringhausen, who throws (or threw) a high-risk knuckle-curve, had suffered prior damage to his medial collateral ligament, and it was operated on in January; he also broke his pitching hand while irritably smashing a trash container after a bad performance last April. Then he was found to have tuberculosis. Still on the Mets' long-term D.L., he is back home in Illinois and is undergoing rehab. Paul Wilson, a composed, strikingly handsome right-hander, had an uncommon reaction to minor arthroscopic shoulder surgery two years ago, which began to limit his ability to throw. He had a bad scare in early March this year, in a B-game down at Port St. Lucie, when severe pain kicked up in the same place in his shoulder. Everyone there was struck dumb, suspecting the worst, an end to his career, but an M.R.I., up in New York, revealed that some adhesions around his scar had torn loose, and that he would be all right, after all. I was on hand the morning he came back into camp, and the clubhouse hugs and yells and the look on the clubhouse faces—from the batboys to the coaches and managers and even the writers—made it like Christmas.

Dr. Altchek, who is forty-one and has the long chest and eager look of a young reliever, told me that the incidence of surgery-inducing injuries is greater among young pitchers than among professional football players, and also that pitching is a more violent activity for the elbow and the shoulder than anything experienced in football. "The minor-league-to-major-league structure is a pyramid, and what's involved for the players within it is a real Darwinian process," he said. "A lot of kids I get to see are enormously talented, but they can't hold up. It isn't their talent that breaks down—it's their bodies. It takes a unique combination of talent and body-fibre type to make it all the way."

Pulse—Bill Pulsipher—broke down: I saw it happen two years ago at Port St. Lucie, when he came out of a game in mid-inning, holding his left arm to one side in an awkward way, and with a mixed look of pain and anger and disbelief on his face. I can't say I was surprised, for I had first seen his cavalry-charge pitching style in Pittsfield, in the Class A New York-Penn League, in 1992, when he was eighteen. Lanky and glowering, he threw left-handed heat with a flurrying sidearm rush of arms and legs that blew away the batters and made you laugh and gasp at the same time. You looked forward to seeing him again, up the line in baseball, but rather thought it wouldn't happen. Moving along in the minors, he ran into elbow damage—a partial medial-collateral-ligament tear that had begun at some earlier point. He rested the elbow over the 1995-96 off-season, but completed the injury when he impetuously decided to air out his arm in that spring game. Dr. Andrews, the Birmingham specialist who did the Brantley procedure, performed a replacement operation on Pulsipher (a Tommy John innovation pioneered by Dr. Frank Jobe, of Los Angeles), removing a tendon from his forearm and stitching it into place inside the elbow. Pulse went into rehabilitation for a full year, and suffered a difficult sort of season last summer. Pitching in games at four minor-league levels, from Rookie League to Class AAA, he encountered inordinate, baffling problems with his control—thirty-eight bases on balls in twenty-four innings at Norfolk, for instance. Cautiously, the Mets' coaches were trying to calm down his delivery a little, hoping to save a potentially great career by easing his explosive ways out there. He also consulted Dr. Allan Lans, a psychiatrist who directs the Mets Employee Assistance Program. It came out that Pulsipher was suffering from anxiety brought about by his lack of control and by the odd way his new arm was performing. Nothing felt right to him. He couldn't grip the ball right, he couldn't find where to release it, he couldn't pick up the catcher. Lans put him on Prozac.

Pulse had a terrific spring this time, giving up only two runs over the sixteen innings he worked, and when I talked to him once again in Port St. Lucie he was energetic in speech, as before—eager to get on with it, man. He has reddish, narrow features, and an almost theatrical burning gaze.

"My control problems weren't all in my arm," he said at once. "I had something going on in my head at the same time. Now I'm taking Prozac. I've changed my motion—I'm not slinging it so much from the side. It feels normal now, and the way I used to throw doesn't. When I got hurt, it wasn't because I was overexcited. I just had an injury. If I'd had better mechanics, it might not have happened. Anyway, I'm still a young man."

Pulse was sent back to Norfolk when the spring season ended. He was upset about it, of course, but the Mets had laid on a new fifth starter, from Japan, Masato Yoshii, and there wasn't another starter's slot available. The coaches assured Pulsipher that this was the right step for him; they wanted to "get Norfolk out of his biography," as they put it. He is expected back, perhaps late this summer, and everyone on the Mets is pulling for him.

Eager young pitchers need a lot of luck just now—most of all in the people who are in charge of their careers. Bob Apodaca, the Mets' pitching coach, may be just the right fit for Pulsipher, not only because he is unblustery in manner—he has a dark, thoughtful gaze and speaks with a teacher's precision—but because he specializes in slowing things down. Last year, when the Mets surprised themselves and everyone else with their strong third-place finish in the powerful National League East, Apodaca turned around several careers among the Mets' hurlers, often by urging a little less heat, a little more patience. He taught a changeup to the fastballer Dave Mlicki, and now he is working on the same thing with Al Leiter. "Farters and grunters" is his word for full-bore, maximum effort pitchers like these, and now the two can even laugh at themselves a little.

"You try to educate pitchers, but you also observe," Apodaca told me. Describing the proper, elbow-saving delivery for a slider, he said, "You don't want to pare it like an orange, you want to slice it," and it came to me later that every Mets pitcher probably carries this poster-clear image in his mind now. Apodaca seemed calm about the Isringhausen-Wilson-Pulsipher debacle. "The list of these injuries goes on everywhere," he said. "It's nothing that we're teaching. It's an industry-wide problem."

Speaking of Pulse, he said, "You don't tinker with natural ability. Pulsipher doesn't land with a nice, closed foot, he lands on an open foot. We're not going to change that, but we've got a better handle on the pacing of his delivery and the calmness of it. He had that quick, violent delivery that almost forced his fastball into a slider, pitch after pitch. He was getting around the ball, which puts such a strain on the elbow. Now he can do everything with a baseball, because we're not interested in where it's going when it crosses the plate but how he delivers it. Stay within your strength. Be sound mechanically."

Apodaca sounded so reasonable that I said something about how these pitching problems—all these pains and breakdowns—looked like a dark cloud that might go away someday, but he wasn't optimistic.

"I don't think we're going to see any end to it, because these kids are so strong and so violent," he said. "The combative strain is always there. It's such a violent act to throw a baseball. There isn't a machine invented by man that can duplicate the G-force that's initiated by the arm action of a throw. We're asking their bodies to absorb this, but it's in their genes to throw hard. We're always going to see shoulder injuries and elbow injuries, as long as there is baseball, and we're going to go right on making the surgeons rich." ♦

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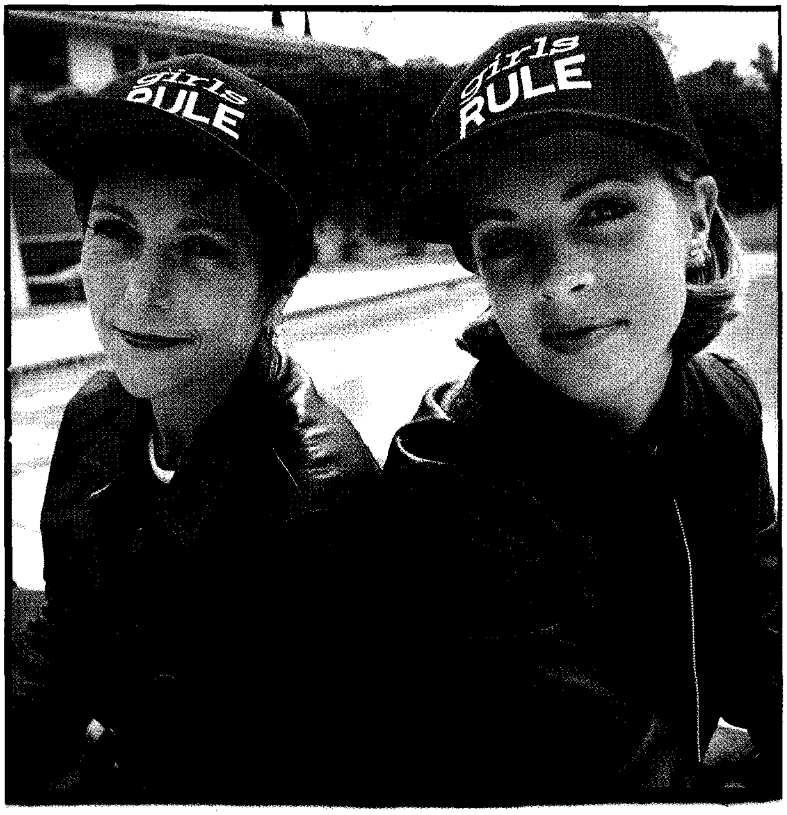
Has Sabrina the Teenage Witch worked her magic on a generation?

BY SUSAN ORLEAN

I GREW up in the sixties and seventies, under the spell of the old television show "Bewitched." I saw every episode, and I loved them all. But lately I have been watching the television show "Sabrina, the Teenage Witch," and I have come to regret that I was fifteen in the "Bewitched" years rather than now. Samantha Stephens, the witch on "Bewitched," was a high-strung, self-doubting, cringing pre-feminist, who tidied her house and suppressed her magical powers and her intellect to mollify her wanky husband, Darrin. Sabrina, on the other hand, is a modern girl. She is independent, spunky, friendly with boys but not obsequious toward them, moderately athletic, unabashedly sentimental, and assertive in the way that only girls who have grown up taking feminism for granted are able to be. "Sabrina, the Teenage Witch" is shown Fridays at nine o'clock on ABC, and this year the network also broadcasts a re-run on Fridays at eight. The nine-o'clock "Sabrina" is watched by more young women, teens, and little kids than any other television program in that time slot, and both the eight-o'clock and the nine-o'clock episodes rank in the top-ten shows among all kids. For many millions of people, the embodiment of modern girlhood is Sabrina the Teenage Witch.

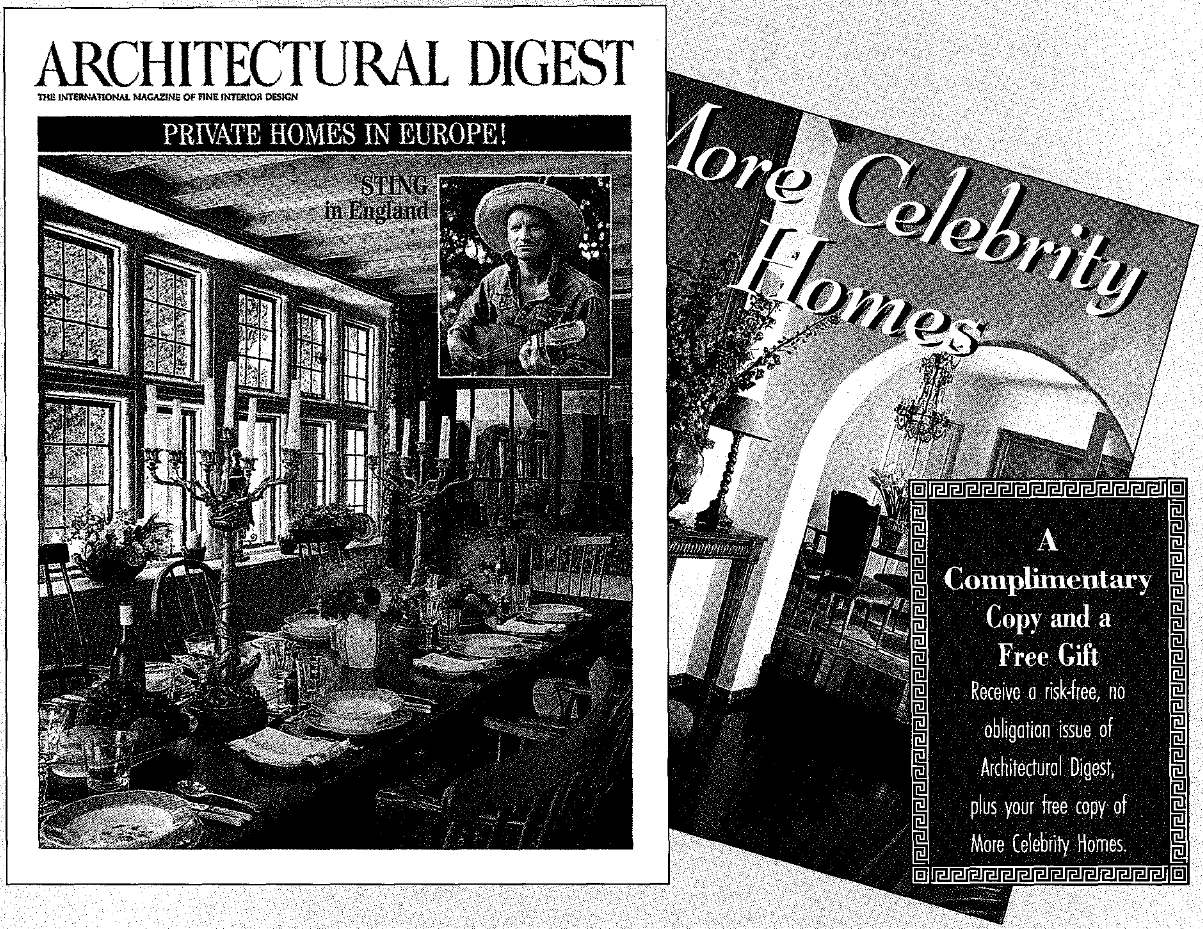


Melissa Joan Hart (right) and her mother: Sabrina's tough-girl wizardry makes "Bewitched" seem old hat. Photograph by Fergus Greer.

Girls these days do seem different, in a Sabrina-like way—they're much cooler now than they were when I was growing up. They definitely look cooler. Recently, I went to Los Angeles to visit Melissa Joan Hart, the actress who plays Sabrina, and between appointments I wandered around major teen-girl loci, like the Beverly Center and the Sherman Oaks Fashion Square. Stores like Rampage and Wet Seal and Miller's Outpost are where Sabrina-style females shop. They buy Groove Girl and Greed Girl and Venus Girl Trap tube tops. They wear T-shirts that say "I GO FROM ZERO TO BITCH IN 2.5 SECONDS" and "MEN HAVE FEELINGS TOO, BUT WHO REALLY CARES?" They wear elevator-soled sneakers and brick-high rubber thongs and carry white vinyl scratch-and-sniff backpacks that say "GODDESS" across the front. They wear synthetics. They wear skateboard pants and surfboard shorts and snowboard turtlenecks, sometimes as fashion and sometimes because they actually skateboard, surf, and snowboard. They are more proudly tomboyish than girls were when I was fifteen, and at the same time they're more willing to be frilly and babyish than we were. They wear super-feminine nylon-net camisoles with photo-transfer images of a Fra Angelico Madonna, or Meow-brand cotton undershirts, decorated with tiny pictures of kittens, paired with huge, manly cargo pants. They buy a lot of music; in fact, last year, for the first time in history, girls bought more music than boys did. They watch a lot of TV that features tough but cute girls—a lot of hours of "Clarissa Explains It All" and "Sabrina, the Teenage Witch."

Many grownups assume that Sabrina is related to, and possibly even the child of, Samantha, of "Bewitched." Actually, the two are totally not related. Sabrina was originally an Archie Comics character who hung out with Jughead and Veronica and Archie; Samantha was just . . . whatever. On "Bewitched," Samantha did have a daughter, but her name was Tabitha, not Sabrina, and she was not teen-aged—she was just a toddler. The Tabitha character did eventually have her own show, in which she appeared as a grownup witch, but that was a million years ago, in the seventies, and after just one season the Tabitha show magically disappeared.

Another big thing: Samantha Stephens activated her magic by doing a nose-wiggle; Sabrina does her magic by pointing her index finger. There is no way they could be related, once you consider that. Still, last season one "Sabrina" writer proposed an episode about Sabrina's having a cold, the writer having apparently forgotten that it would have been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funny only for a witch who did magic with her nose. As *if.*

MELISSA JOAN HART is twenty-two years old and grew up in Sayville, Long Island. At the age of four, after seeing an episode of "Romper Room," Melissa told her mother that she wanted to be on television. The Harts were not a show-business family. Melissa's father, William, is a lobster wholesaler. Her mother, Paula, is now an executive producer of "Sabrina," but her television experience began with Melissa's. After Melissa was chosen to appear on "Romper Room," Paula looked into local auditions. At Melissa's first audition, she won the supporting role in a commercial for a bathtub toy called Splashy. Over the next decade, she appeared in ads for Connecticut Natural Gas and Rice Krispies, among others, and in plays in New York.

In 1988, a writer and producer named Mitchell Kriegman was dreaming up a show that he called "Clarissa Explains It All," which had at its center a modern preteen girl. Casting Clarissa was not easy. Kriegman wanted an actress who wasn't a goody-goody, but wasn't a sex vixen, either; he also envisioned Clarissa as a girl that boys could relate to. "I wanted her to be a girl who was really original and unique but also popular," Kriegman says. "She'd be the cool girl for nice girls, not the kid with the nose ring. I wanted to show that a nice girl could be smart and different, as opposed to being a typical fast, popular girl. I pictured her as what my wife might have been like at Clarissa's age." The TV girl character of that moment—this was 1990—was brassy and combative, a sort of mini-Joan Rivers girl, along the lines of "Blossom" star Mayim Bialik. By contrast, Melissa Joan Hart was shy and soft-spoken. At thirteen, she still looked about twelve—blond and bright-eyed, with big teeth and a little mouth and peachy cheeks. She projected rationalism and self-reliance, plus she was cute; Kriegman was sure he'd found Clarissa, and in February, 1990, Melissa got the role.

There was never any chance that Clarissa might have been a Clarence. "I'd always get asked why a forty-two-year-old man was writing a girl character," Kriegman says. "I think fourteen-year-old girls are great. They exist in a very particular pocket of the universe, and they are especially adept at organizing the world. It's just a lot cooler to show an assertive girl than to show a sensitive boy. Though the conventional television wisdom is that girls will watch boy characters but boys won't watch girl characters, my feeling was that a kid was a kid. We dealt with kid issues, not girl issues. Our audience turned out to be evenly divided between boys and girls."

"Clarissa Explains It All" originally ran on Nickelodeon from 1991 to 1994 and continues in reruns now. Besides its natural preteen girl audience, it is popular with unlikely people—all those boys, for one thing, and a lot of adults. Clarissa exists outside the show, too: there is a universe of Clarissa/Melissa Joan Hart books and board games, a superhero comic on the Web called "Go! Go! Superstar Clarissa," and a constellation of home pages. One site advises readers where they can find archived still shots from Melissa's earliest commercials. Another one answers almost Talmudically specific questions about Melissa, such as "What's the deal with her teeth?"

> Melissa fans have always thought she was missing only one tooth—the one just to the right of her two front teeth—for the first three seasons of "CEIA." But Tom Huston said on 9 Feb., 1996, that she was born without her two top laterals. . . . The images I did from the "Nick News" story contain the best shots of her teeth yet. When you watch, it's very obvious that she was indeed missing the tooth to either side of her two front teeth. By the way, you can also check out some images from her 1986 TV movie, "Christmas Snow," for shots of her teeth at age nine or ten.

AFTER sixty-five episodes of "Clarissa," Melissa and her mother wanted to find a new role for her. A producer suggested the Archie Comics character Sabrina. Sabrina is a half-mortal, half-magical high-school student whose parents are always off somewhere like Peru or Mars or the late fourteenth century, so Sabrina spends her teen-age years living with her witch aunts, Hilda and Zelda. Before Sabrina moved in with them, the aunts enjoyed leisurely, sybaritic suburban lives; for instance, they had really good-looking male household employees who would serve them dinner bare-chested. As soon as the aunts are asked to care for young Sabrina, they fire the bare-chested employees and resolve to straighten up and fly right for their niece's sake. The aunts solve the parents problem: they are adult, but not strict or punitive, and Sabrina doesn't have all those messy psychosexual conflicts with them that she might have with parents. As the show's creator, Nell Scovell, likes to say, the typical TV mother is usually either dead or sensible, and both sorts would have got in the way of Sabrina's personal growth.

When the series begins, Sabrina has just turned sixteen, which, according to Sabrina mythology, is the typical age of witch-power onset. On the morning of her birthday, she involuntarily levitates—the first clue that her life is about to change. From that moment on, Sabrina struggles to learn how to use her magic and at the same time to cope with normal teen-age misery, such as being sort of unpopular but smart, having occasional feelings of boredom, being tormented by the busty, snobby social queen of her school, and not getting along very well with the school's vice-principal. The goal was to portray a typical teen-age girl who happens to be a witch, rather than a witch of a certain age. "Every teen-age girl feels like a freak," Scovell said recently. "Sabrina is a normal teen-age girl who really *is* a freak." For instance, because she is the new kid at school, Sabrina is snubbed by the popular girl, Libby; because she is a witch, she turns Libby into a pineapple.

The Sabrina character first appeared in a movie-of-the-week on the cable network Showtime. NBC, ABC, and UPN then bid on a Sabrina series. ABC won, by proposing to show "Sabrina" as part of "T.G.I.F.," the network's popular Friday-night block of programming aimed at subadults. The show was scheduled for eight-thirty, not the prime nine-o'clock spot, because that had already been reserved for "Clueless"—another girl-power show, but one about a mortal teen-ager with credit cards. Shows with cute, powerful girl characters were starting to pop up all over television, among them the popular Warner Bros. series "Buffy the Vampire Slayer." Like "Clarissa," "Sabrina" had an audience of both boys and girls, and also a surprising number of adults. The show is now nearing the end of its second season, and has been guaranteed at least two more. It has also been a success around the world. In England, for instance, ITV replaced "Baywatch," which features vapid, full-figured actresses in swimsuits, with "Sabrina, the Teenage Witch."

In March, one of the last "Sabrina" episodes was shot in the new Animal Kingdom at DisneyWorld, in Orlando. The show is usually filmed on a soundstage in Los Angeles, with artificial weather. In Orlando, it was filmed outside, in weather that was only too real: charcoal-colored clouds bunched up overhead, and every fifteen minutes or so rain came down as if it were pouring out of a pail. When I arrived at the Animal Kingdom to watch the filming, everyone and almost everything was covered with yellow Mickey Mouse ponchos because of the rain. A group of sixteen-year-old girls from Orlando who had been hired as extras to play snooty cheerleaders from Sabrina's school were huddled at Tamu Tamu Refreshments, eating wet French fries. The girls looked a little nervous about their hair.

"I'm about to totally frizz," one of them said.

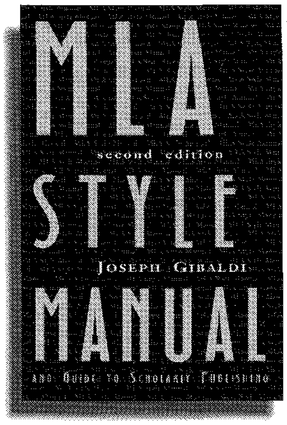
"As if we weren't all going to," another one answered.

"Have you met her yet?" a girl asked. "I mean, Sabrina? I mean *Melissa*?"

The girls shook their heads and sat quietly for a moment. Then one said, "I hear they pay her *one hundred* dollars to say one line."

"Yeah, not even," the frizzy one answered. "Probably more. But she doesn't get any time in DisneyWorld to go on any rides."

Actually, during the downpour Melissa and the woman who does her hair had sneaked out to the Gorilla Falls Exploration Trail. Paula Hart was canvassing the crew to see if anyone knew where she had gone. Paula has cropped cranberry-toned hair and merry eyes and a pixie face. She could pass as a teen-age witch herself and has probably been taken for Melissa's sister many times. She often says that the two of them grew up together, by which she means that they set out together as rookies in the world of television—Melissa at age four and Paula at twenty-four—and have advanced together, rather than going through the more



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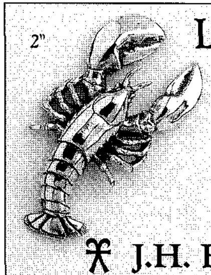

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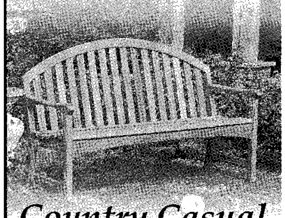

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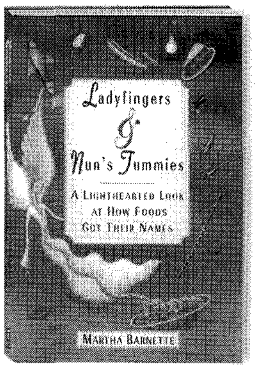

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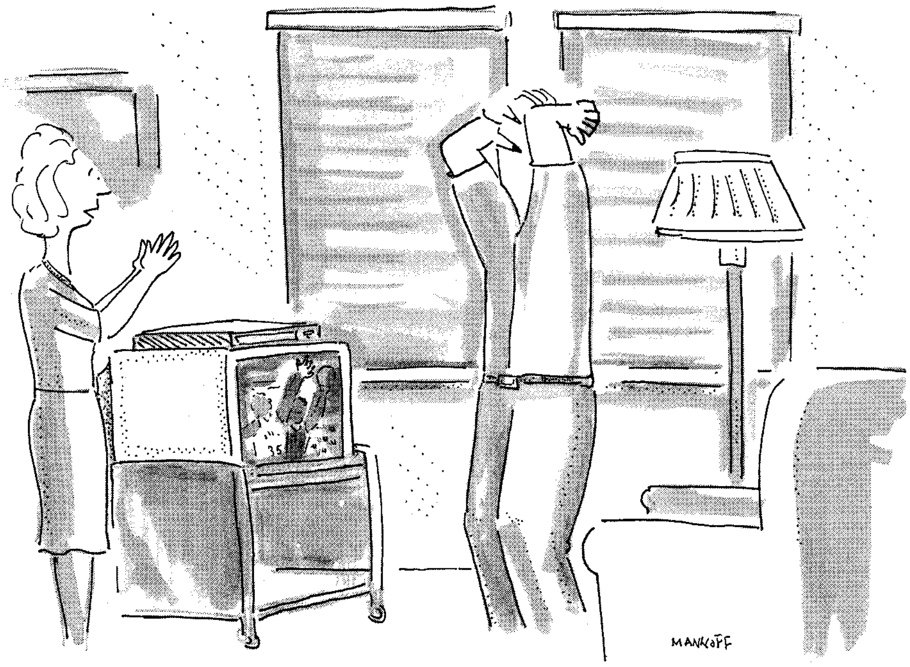

"But that's the beauty of the game. At this very moment, your absurd vicarious defeat is being perfectly counterbalanced by some opposing fan's absurd vicarious triumph."

usual stage-mother/stage-daughter relationship of pushing and pulling. In fact, Paula is the more carefree of the two, even though she is an actual adult, with six children besides Melissa. The youngest is an infant, whom she planned to name Sabrina until Melissa complained that it would be too weird. Paula named the baby Samantha instead, and says that she settled for the name of the second-best witch in the world. Several of the Hart children have appeared on "Sabrina," and Paula told me she was working on a pilot for her daughter Emily, who had been a guest star in one episode, as Sabrina's brat cousin Amanda.

Even though the Animal Kingdom hadn't officially opened, fifty thousand or so Disney employees and their families had been invited to try out the park, and as they came along many of them stopped to gape at the filming. A clump of little girls gathered near one of the cameras. Most of them were carrying Sabrina notebooks and felt-tips, and stood wordlessly with their pens outstretched until someone noticed them. Melissa was still missing, but Libby, the show's snobby social queen, was around, so one of the crew members motioned her over to sign the books. Libby is played by Jenna Leigh Green, a regal-looking young woman who had just spent some time with me discussing shoes. She cooed at the little girls and gave them autographs, and then let them take pictures of her with their throwaway paper cameras. When they were done, they inched away, peering back at her anxiously, the way you'd glance back after edging past a napping Doberman. Jenna watched them and waved. "These kids, they're so scared of me," she said. "They're always saying, 'Why do you have to be so mean to Sabrina?' Some of the little ones, I guess, just don't grasp the concept of fiction and reality."

A FEW days after the filming in Orlando, I went to Los Angeles, to visit Melissa. She was spending most of the week catching up on errands, and then was going to the Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Awards show, where she would be presenting the award for Favorite Athlete to the skater Kristi Yamaguchi and would be honored herself, as Favorite Female Television Actress of the Year. It was a busy moment. She had just bought her first house, and was living there with her boyfriend, James, and her supposedly spayed dog, which had just magically given birth. She told me that her house was a complete mess and smelled like puppies, so we agreed to meet instead at Paula's house at midday, before the Nickelodeon show. That morning, Melissa was being photographed for a book about Sabrina's hair styles. Sabrina is famous for never wearing her hair the same way twice, and Melissa warned me that at the photo shoot she was planning to cut her long blond hair into a chin-length bob and dye it red. When I arrived at Paula's house, Paula was in her bathroom, dyeing her own hair cherry-red; the older Hart kids were watching a video; and the baby, Samantha, was toddling around the sunny living room. After a while, Melissa arrived with James. She had got her hair cut but was still a blonde. "Chickened out," she explained to Paula. "Too much change in one day." She was wearing a powder-blue blouse, banged-up jeans, and sneakers. The blouse had been a "Sabrina" costume, and the jeans were from a full-length television movie she'd been in. Melissa is small and round-shouldered, and has bright eyes with thick lashes, a tiny, ski-jump nose, and a perfect smile. She is breathless and antsy, and talks a mile a minute. Now that she's no longer a teen-ager, she uses her seventeen-year-old sister, Elizabeth, as a research subject. "I've done my teen years so many times already on TV," she said. "I know that teen-ager way of being. I see Elizabeth doing her mood swings—you know, 'I hate you,' 'I love you'—and that's the way Sabrina is, sometimes nasty and then sweet."

She needed to put on her makeup for the awards show, so we wandered through the house until she found an empty bathroom with a mirrored vanity. She sketched on some eyeliner, and then Elizabeth walked in. "Dude," she said to Melissa, "what are you wearing to the party tonight?" The end-of-the-season "Sabrina"-crew party was being held that evening, after the Nickelodeon show. The theme of the party was the seventies.

"I don't know yet," Melissa said. "Hey, you should flip your hair all up."

"Naah," Elizabeth said. "I'm going *late* seventies, not early. I want more of a 'Love Story' thing than a Farrah Fawcett thing."

"Ooh," Melissa said. "You go, girl."

Another sister, Emily, came into the room and stood on a bathroom scale facing Melissa. "Dude," she said to Melissa, "when I stand on here, I'm almost as tall as you are."

"Yeah," Melissa said, squinting at her. "But your boobs aren't nearly as big as mine."

Emily jumped off the scale and said, "As if I'd want them to be."

While Melissa finished her make-up, she remarked that her life had reached a funny stage. "I've been getting hell for being too old to play Sabrina," she said. "Yeah, like I'm so ancient. But I'm also getting hell for looking too young to play adults. Like, I just competed with Angelina Jolie for a role, and, I mean, she's an adult. She's a beautiful, adult, mature woman. So, naturally, because it was an adult part, it went to her, not to me. The part I really, really, really wanted was the lead in 'The Mod Squad.' I wanted that *so* much. Oh, well. So now I'm reading for a part in a movie called 'Girl Gives Birth to Prom Date.' It's really funny, and I like it, because it makes teenagers look like real people." She put on one more coat of mascara. Then she changed out of her jeans and sneakers, and stepped into a curvy royal-blue dress and high heels. It was astonishing to watch a girl grow up—go through a few critical stages of life—in an instant. A few minutes later, we were out of the house and on the road, and a few minutes after that we reached the auditorium where the awards show was being held. Three thousand kids were in the seats, screaming their heads off as their favorite actors and singers and athletes came onstage. When Melissa was presented with her award for Favorite Television Actress, Paula started to cry, and said to me, "I mean, that's my little girl!"

A moment later, Madonna appeared on the stage. The show's host, Rosie O'Donnell, greeted her and then hushed the crowd. "Did you have something you wanted to say, Madonna?" she asked.

Madonna leaned toward the microphone and shouted, "I got one thing to say, Rosie. Kids rule!" ♦

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PROFILE

EXISTENTIAL COWBOY

Robert Redford got Disney to pay three million dollars so that he could make a film of an unfinished book that some say he hadn't even read. What was he after?

BY RICHARD RAYNER

ROBERT REDFORD told me a story recently about John Huston and his 1948 film "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre." The movie, based on a B. Traven novel, is about three American treasure seekers who find gold in the mountains of Mexico, go crazy, and end up trying to kill one another. Redford saw the film as a child of eleven, and regards it as one of the most meaningful cinematic experiences of his life. "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre" is uncompromising in its emotional intensity and its depiction of a character—Fred C. Dobbs, played by Humphrey Bogart—made paranoid and homicidal by his appetite for money. "Huston was interested in greed and power," Redford said. "I, too, find them appealing, because greed and power make things go. The wheel finally turns on greed and power. They're the motives that are important to know. All systems that control us, whether political or financial, or simply an industry that controls a town, run on greed and power."

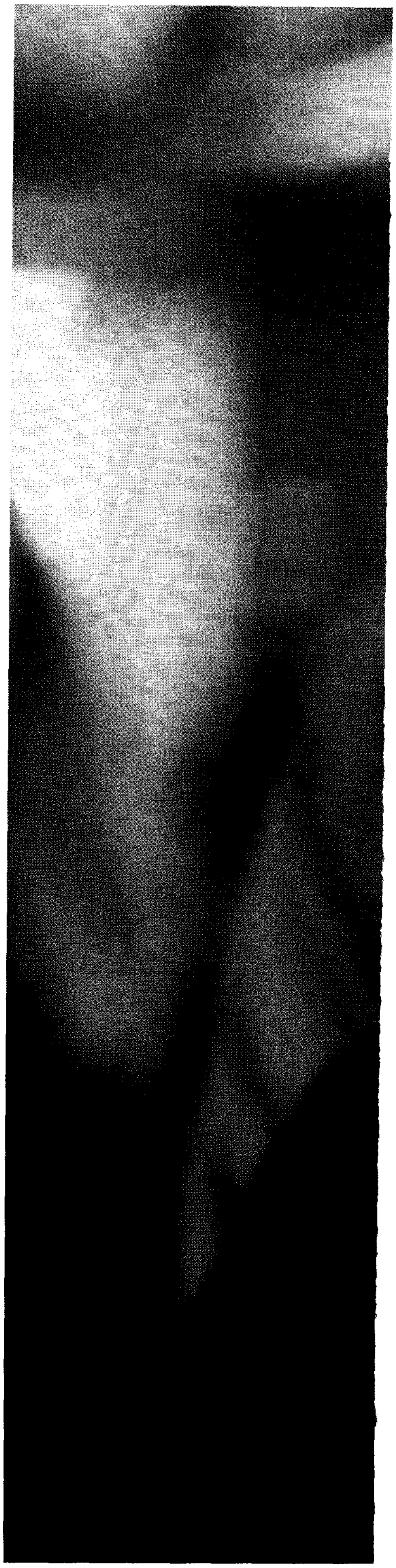
We were sitting in the cafeteria of the fitness center at George Lucas's Skywalker Ranch, in Marin County, California, where Redford was completing his new film, "The Horse Whisperer." For Redford, "The Horse Whisperer" is an unusual project. Until now, he has acted in twenty-nine films; he has directed four ("Ordinary People," a tearjerker about family guilt and repression, won two Oscars in 1980, and "Quiz Show," a perfectly judged backward glance at the game-show scandals of the late nineteen-fifties, gained him a nomination in 1994); he has produced and acted in three; but "The Horse Whisperer" is the first in which he's tried to do it all—direct, produce, star. As seems the custom among ambitious Hollywood films, "The Horse Whisperer" was late (it was originally scheduled to be a Christmas movie) and over budget (costing more than seventy-five million dollars, mainly because production started, stopped, started again, and was then interrupted by further delays and bad weather), and was now racing to meet a new, early-summer release date of May 15th.

"I'd never met Huston," Redford said. "And then an executive asked if I'd take a meeting with him. This executive had been the head of two studios, and had been made the head of another because he'd been the head of two studios. In the scheme of things, an irrelevant character, but in Hollywood a guy who was right up at the top of the list. He wore an excessive amount of jewelry and was very coiffed."

Huston had a project—a writing project, not something he would direct, because he was too ill for directing. Huston, in other words, was coming to make a pitch.

"I remember thinking at the time I'd love to meet John Huston, but this didn't feel quite right. The idea of Huston's sitting in the face of this bejewelled character, auditioning—well, it seemed absurd. But I went. And Huston had come from his boat off San Diego with his oxygen tank, and, except for when he ran out of breath and had to collect more oxygen to carry on speaking, he behaved as though everything were as it always had been, and would be made perfect by his spirit and his energy. It was wonderful. I began by telling him how much I admired him, and that he was responsible for what may have been a turn in my life. He was very gracious. He said, 'Thank you, dear boy, thank you.' He had a baronial, baroque style of speaking.

"Huston proceeded to tell his story. And while he talked I watched the exe-



Paul Newman, Redford's good friend, says the

ay to describe him "is that sometimes he's in the room and he leaves the room and you can't tell the difference." Photograph by John Dolan.

cutive, who had become extremely uncomfortable, and was drinking. He sat there, perfectly coiffed, belting back Scotch after Scotch. Finally, John said, 'Well, there you have it, that's the way I see it,' and the executive started to stammer, saying, 'Well, this is really wonderful, we're going to be taking a long look at this.' He was clearly unable to make any kind of commitment, saying, 'Hey, this sounds great,' and then he stammered some more, and said, 'And let's do it, yes?' And he turned to me, saying, 'What about you, Bob? Are you enthusiastic enough to get on board?' He just didn't know what to do. So he talked, and he talked, trying to be gracious to John while extricating himself from this situation, and Huston just looked at him with that rueful expression of his. And, finally, he said, 'Well, gentlemen, this is all very good, but, you see, I'm afraid I must go. I'm running out of oxygen.' And he got up and left, carrying his tank with him."

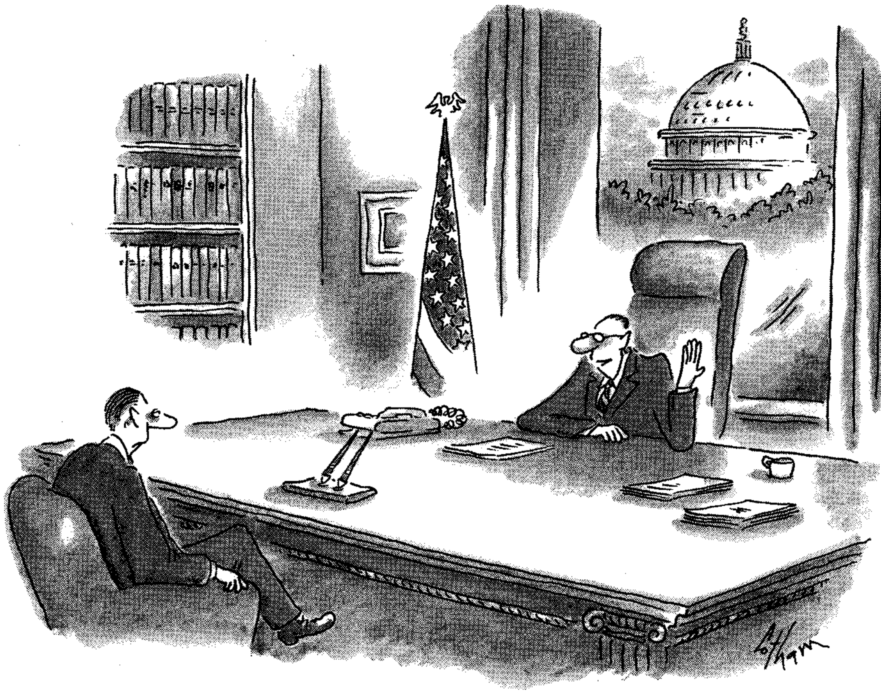
For Redford, it was an illustration of Huston and Hollywood—how they played each other, as in a game of poker. And Huston, according to Redford, was a brilliant cardplayer. The secret was in knowing what not to give away. "With players like that around the table, you have to know what cards to keep," Redford said. Like Huston, he, too, has found a way of dealing with Hollywood. He ducks in and out, keeping a distance, playing with the industry, beating it, gauging it, taking nothing for granted. When he talks about making a movie, he uses combat metaphors—shadowboxing or guerrilla raids—and there's no doubt that Hollywood is the enemy, a thing to be beaten. The attitude hasn't endeared him to studio heads, agents, or even to those who are in Hollywood but are working on his behalf. Yet his shrewd, defensive tactics—"He knows how to fuck with their heads," one producer told me—have guaranteed a lot more than mere survival within the system. Redford, in anyone's terms, is a big winner.

I'D met Redford a month before, in Santa Monica, in the mixing booth of a soundstage. He had been sincere and, although impeccably polite, a little testy. His first words, after he'd shaken my hand and sat me down in a chair, were "What do you know? What have you been told?" For a moment, inches away from that iconic face, I felt not like a journalist but like a Watergate conspirator being interrogated by Bob Woodward, of the Washington *Post*—Woodward as played by Redford himself, of course, in the movie "All the President's Men." "I have no interest in doing this," Redford said, meaning no interest in coöperating with the author of any piece about him. He was in a "crisis zone" with "The Horse Whisperer," right on the edge of missing the release date. Just how busy he'd been was testified to by the people who constantly popped in and out of the booth, demanding his attention. He got on the phone to Wildwood Enterprises, his film-production company. "The answer's no, just say it's no, no to both requests," he said. While I was wondering what he'd said no to so definitively, he turned back to me, saying, "I see what's in this for you, but what's in it for me?" He sighed, and, answering his own question—Redford managing Redford—said, "I'd be doing it for the film, and the studio." He wasn't angry, or depressed; he just seemed weary. He said that often when he read what was written about him it felt wrong: not hostile, just wide of the mark. "There's been a lot of not getting it," he said. "I don't think I'm very charismatic. I don't even think I'm that interesting. So why do you want to write about me?" Later, I realized that, like John Huston, I'd been auditioned.

We met again on the Thursday before Easter, April 9th, after Redford invited me to spend much of the next week with him working at the Skywalker Ranch film facility. The place, spectacularly located on several thousand acres of rolling Northern California countryside, is a natural for Redford, who has no great fondness for Los Angeles—"I can trash it because I grew up there," he said. The final stages of work on "The Horse Whisperer" were carried out in a piece of architecture which from the outside resembles a California winery—complete with trestled vineyards—but is in fact the Skywalker Ranch Technical Building, filled with the latest sound- and film-editing technology. The building houses eight studios, or mixing stages; Redford's was Mixing Stage A, a pastel-lit room, with an Art Deco roof, a theatre-size movie screen, and a twenty-foot-long, ninety-six-track mixing board, supported by a sound-mixing crew of eighty-five members (a number of whom had recently collected Oscars for "Titanic"). At any one time, a portion of "The Horse Whisperer" would be playing on the movie screen—over and over again, backward and forward, with bits of dialogue being added, bits being subtracted, and sound effects and music being layered on. There are directors, James Cameron among them, who stand over the shoulders of the sound crew, controlling every sonic detail; Redford arrives only when a specific instruction has been completed. He would view the results and discuss various nuances: Less music, more music? Do we need the thunder? Wasn't there a line of dialogue here we could put in from the production footage? It was work of tormenting detail. Redford would write out a new instruction, leave, and return later. Sometimes, in the interim, we'd sit and talk in his office, just outside the soundstage, where the walls were decorated with movie posters, and his desk was tidy, and the coffee table was stacked high with books. Other times, he'd go upstairs to the cutting room, or else vanish, and no one would know where he was. A member of the sound-mixing crew would eventually come off the stage and ask, with a hopeful expression, "Did Bob happen to say when he'd be back?"

I got the sense that once Redford left the room he could be anywhere. It's one of the traditional ways that movie stars exercise power—making others wait—but in Redford's case he's apparently always been that way, and just as he leaves you with the teasing notion that he might never come back he returns as if he'd never been away, stealing into rooms softly, almost wraithlike, startling you with his presence. "The best way I could describe it is that sometimes he's in the room and he leaves the room and you can't tell the difference," his friend the actor Paul Newman told me. Even when Redford was there, in front of me, and he was being thoughtful, attentive, indubitably present, there was a quality I couldn't grasp. He's not quite there even when he's there, and although all the time I was at Skywalker he behaved with self-deprecating charm and the utmost geniality, giving me the sense that he was allowing me in, letting me see something that others don't, I knew that he would let me see only so much before he disappeared again, and that if I asked too much, if suddenly I said, "So, Bob, tell me about your new girlfriend"—because I'd heard that he has one—he would *immediately* vanish forever. His manner didn't permit the question. For the record, he has three children—two girls and a boy, all adults now and all by his ex-wife, Lola, to whom he was married for more than twenty years—and four grandchildren. He mentioned that his family was flying in for Easter, and that he was organizing an Easter-egg hunt. (After Easter, he told me, with a wry smile, that no one had been able to figure out the clues he'd put together.) When he's not working, he divides most of his time between a mountaintop aerie in Utah and an apartment in New York: he says the contrast between the extremes of urban America and the American wilderness has always been a source of inspiration.

I kept going back to his original question, "Why do you want to write about me?" I'd told him that his life was a great American story, and during the time I spent with him at Skywalker I tried to figure out why I thought that. As a director, Redford possesses nothing like the sheer wealth of George Lucas, or the worldwide box-office clout of Steven Spielberg, or the pyrotechnical narrative brilliance of Martin Scorsese. And as a movie star, well—he is now an aging one. And yet there's no actor most people are happier to watch, and we all remember those huge hits, some of them leaky narrative boats that somehow came triumphantly home to port: "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid," "The Way We Were," "The Sting," "Out of Africa." In fact, perhaps it makes more sense to think of him in terms of Cary Grant than of Brad Pitt. "Cary Grant would look at his own dailies and be able to tell the director in which takes he was working best. He was good," Redford told me. Redford has stage-managed the creation of himself as an elusive enigmatic in a distinctly unmodern way, and his inaccessibility is a part of his success and his allure. Redford is probably the only living actor who conforms to an old idea of what a movie star should be.



"I keep my core beliefs written on my palm for easy reference."

• •

"THE HORSE WHISPERER" begins in dreamlike black, with close-ups of a stallion, and moves quickly to a white, snow-covered New England countryside, where two teen-age girls greet each other in the morning and go riding. The girls, laughing, leave a dirt road and go into the woods and up an icy hill, where the footing is tricky. One of the animals slips, slides back down the hill, and collides with the other, knocking it down. The two horses tumble, one girl still on her mount, the other hanging from a stirrup, bumping along, until they spill onto the icy road at the bottom of the slope, where a trailer truck, Klaxons blaring, thunders toward them. The truck brakes, slews, jackknifes, and runs over one of the girls and her horse, killing them. The second horse, with its rider, Grace, still atop, is right in front of the truck as it continues its slide. The horse rears and smashes into the windshield, throwing Grace to the ground. By the time help arrives, Grace is close to death. She's flown to a hospital, and survives, but her leg is amputated.

The sequence of scenes is tightly orchestrated, loud, and very violent. Redford told me that it was the most difficult stuff he's ever filmed. The action was complex, the weather uncoöperative. He and his crew moved around the country, chasing snow, and the final scenes use footage from different locations. The road the girls leave to ascend the hill is in open country, passing through a pretty New England farm. The road along which the truck roars is set among snowy pine trees; it doesn't quite look like New England anymore, and that's because it isn't: it's California—the Sierras. Redford was distressed, moreover, by the content of a scene that portrayed the killing of a horse, the maiming of another horse, the killing of a child, and the crippling of another. "You can't help but take it on, if you have any tenderness in you at all," he said. Redford and his wife lost a child, their first, when Redford was in his early twenties, and the loss was evoked in the making of the movie. When I asked him about it, he became defensive. (I was obviously asking one of the questions you don't ask.) "It happened, so I'll tell you, but I don't want to talk about it. It was sudden-infant-death syndrome. It never gets quite explained, so even that was taken away from us. The scar doesn't go away."

"The Horse Whisperer," like "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre," is a film of emotional intensity and exaggeration, although it is clearly not about greed and power but about more heartfelt, ostensibly cornier notions, like redemption and healing. "It's about the issue of love," Redford said when I asked him to explain the picture. "How it's expressed, how it can enlighten and damage at the same time. How love works. How the varieties of love work. New love. Impossible love. Love that can't be had."

Grace's mother, Annie (Kristin Scott Thomas), is a New York magazine editor—driven, self-obsessed, and English. She now has on her hands an uncommunicative, depressed daughter who believes that she, and her horse, should be put down. When Annie reads an article about Tom Booker (Redford), a Montana rancher who has a special way of working with and healing horses, she packs up their own ruined animal in a trailer and drives across the country with her daughter to track him down. Thus the three essential story lines are set up: horse and daughter must both be made well; the self-absorbed mother must reawaken her sense of family; and Tom Booker, a man who has given up expecting anything from life except his work, must learn to love again.

I was sitting in the middle row of the soundstage waiting for Redford when he slipped into the theatre, grabbed a cookie, and sat down in his chair at the center of the mixing board before anyone there realized he had arrived. He picked up a phone and spoke to someone at Disney, the studio financing the picture, back in Burbank. "The TV spots all seem to lean toward the love story. I want to make sure we don't promise something we don't deliver. Listen, I know your research is telling you to go with the love story, but I wondered why the horse wasn't shown. Can we talk tomorrow when you're in your office? You're in your car, right?" Redford's manner was easy and unchallenging. He listened hard to what the man on the other end had to say, and when he finished the lights went down and we watched the scenes that the sound-mixing crew had been working on all afternoon—reels fifteen and sixteen, when Annie's husband, Robert, arrives unexpectedly from New York just as Booker and Annie have fallen in love. The lights came back up. Redford was worried about a moment when Booker is alone in his room at the ranch: he goes to put on a record, but instead slips it back into its sleeve, and sits down in a rocking chair. The question was the music cue: should it run over from the previous scene into this one? Redford turned to me: "I'm an advocate of silence in film. Some people think music should always lead the moment. There's a pressure now to fill every frame with a barrage of music and image. It's the culture that's changing. I can see that, but I don't go along with it."

Redford viewed the scene, first with the music cue and then without, and the difference between the two was startling. The version without music was film operating as pure film, and I was struck by the loneliness, the weariness even, of the Tom Booker character. With the music, the scene said something different: yes, it said, Tom Booker is lonely and sad, but he is romantic, too. It was more Hollywood. Redford thought for a while, said he preferred the version without music, with its exaggerated sound effects—the thud of the album sleeve, the creak of the rocking chair—but wondered whether it was too spare. He was unsure. For the moment, he decided to go with the music. It seemed like the safe call, and certainly the more sentimental one.

CHARLES ROBERT REDFORD, JR., born in a Spanish-speaking neighborhood of Santa Monica on August 18, 1937, was the only child of a Scots-Irish milkman who later became an accountant and who, in the early nineteen-fifties, moved his small family into a tract home in the San Fernando Valley, in search of a better life. "It didn't seem like a better life to me," Redford said. "It seemed like a step down. Back then, the Valley was a big oven with nothing in it, a great sea of nothing, an ocean with no ships on it, and at night if you went out there were very few lights. I spent my time wanting to leave. So it was sports and getting into trouble. And cruising and getting into trouble. Drag racing on Van Nuys Boulevard."

Redford was a gifted athlete but bone idle. He also hated school, and often skipped it—a rebellion against his family, many of whom were educators. He had twin great-aunts who were both

WELCOME TO HEAVEN
Victoria Roberts

"There'll be a little wait—would you like to have a drink at the bar?"

THE CONVERSATION

This then was the conversation
There were others, of course, not a few
But there was this one
Time and again
The one that truly mattered
And the others, well
I can barely remember the others
But this one
That drove all ahead of it
A great wave or wind
That tore apart the very ground
That sent up a wall of debris
That would leave nothing
Could leave only nothing
By design
If asked
If one could ask a brute thing
Inquire of rock or bone
Entreat
Put one's own arm
One's hand
Down into the engine of its force
To know its workings
Even if torn to pieces
To have felt down there
Felt something
Move
An intelligence of parts
Gear and ratchet
Anything
But not this
No, not this, ever, no
Only the fact of it
This whirlwind
Why not
A Biblical reek to it
Perfect
But scaled down
Way down
And kept in the vestibule
An ornament
A kinetic sculpture
In the corner
On a stand
An *objet d'art*

—AUGUST KLEINZAHLER

teachers, one a Republican, the other a Communist and a follower of Emma Goldman. They died within ten days of each other, both run over, one on the East Coast, the other on the West. His uncle, a Rhodes Scholar, had a contract to play baseball for the St. Louis Browns, enlisted, and was serving in Patton's Third Army when he was killed by a German sniper in Belgium. "Don't get me going about my family," Redford said. "It's a lot of bad luck." His father was obsessed with not having enough money. "When I was born, my father earned thirty-five dollars a week. I remember hearing that figure most of my life. It was jammed down my throat, or up my ass. Somebody who'd worked so hard for so little didn't take kindly to his kid lying in the grass staring at clouds. He'd say it over and over again, 'Thirty-five dollars a week, thirty-five dollars a week, thirty-five dollars a week.' I obviously wasn't going to amount to much. It gave me an edge. I went out looking for it, the wildest possible edge, and I went after it with a vengeance."

His mother died when Redford was eighteen, and soon after he left the Valley to attend the University of Colorado (he started as a prelaw student and then changed to art). "I wasn't happy. I was drinking, and talking all the time about going to Europe, dreaming about Utrillo and Matisse and Braque," Redford recalls. "I wanted to be in that place, where they'd been. I'd wanted out of L.A., but Colorado wasn't far enough. I had a teacher, Richard Dudley, who said, 'Don't talk. Just go do it.' "

So in 1956, Redford dropped out and left. "Around the time I went to Europe, I got interested in who I was. I felt as though a film had been ripped from my eyes. I'd done sports, I'd done trouble, and suddenly something clicked into place. I went everywhere with a pad, sketching, drawing pictures, making notes. A consciousness is what happened to me."

He had, in effect, a crash course in European politics. He met French Communists who attacked his naïve certainty in the virtue of the American system. In Paris, he lived in a derelict house, still bomb-damaged, with a bunch of students and artists. He went to Vienna, where he helped refugees from the Hungarian rising. On New Year's Eve, in Rome, he was spotted by Ava Gardner as she swept into a restaurant, and she kissed him on the lips. In his telling of his own story, in his self-mythology, I suspect, this period has assumed more and more importance for Redford the older he's got. He told me that he went to Europe feeling embarrassed and stupid, less experienced than many of his generation, and much more ignorant, and came back, feeling ten years older, as if he knew secrets they didn't. He did not return to the West Coast but became a student at the Pratt Institute, in Brooklyn, and met and married Lola Van Wagenen, a seventeen-year-old Mormon from Provo, Utah. His acting career began in 1959, with a walk-on. He played a basketball player in a comedy, and wasn't required to speak a line. He was twenty-two.

"There was an arrogance when I started to act," Redford said, recalling those first unlikely parts he played—a sociopath, a criminal, bad guys. "I felt I could do it. I hadn't had much experience, but when I got into it, when I shifted from art to acting, something happened very naturally, and then I took it seriously and worked hard at it, and then I developed a curious confidence about it. I could do it. And I knew I could do it better than a lot of people. And I don't know why."

Soon he was a jobbing actor, shuttling between New York and Los Angeles, working on the stage and, especially, in television. Between April 30, 1960, and October 16, 1963, he appeared in more than twenty programs, including "Play of the Week," "Perry Mason" (an episode titled "The Case of the Treacherous Toupee"), "Alfred Hitchcock Presents," and "The Twilight Zone."

The director Mike Nichols remembers directing Redford in 1963, in Neil Simon's play "Barefoot in the Park" at the Bucks County Playhouse, in Pennsylvania, before the play moved to Broadway and became a smash. "Bob had a Porsche, and I had a Jaguar XKE, and we used to race out from New York to get there," Nichols told me. "We got stopped for speeding one time, and as the cop started to write out the ticket he put his foot up on the fender of Bob's Porsche. Bob said, 'Get your foot off my car.' The cop didn't hesitate: he removed his foot."

Was ordering a traffic cop to get his foot off the fender of your Porsche really such well-advised behavior back in 1963? I asked Redford. "Mike remembered that? It *was* dumb. I had an abiding difficulty with authority. Something would go off inside me, and I'd then have to rein myself in. I had a lot of anger. In 'Barefoot,' I let it out in improvisation, and through a craziness I discovered I had when onstage. It was like working with a therapist, that time with Mike, but at least you knew the therapist was a little nuts."

Redford had a wild comic energy that audiences these days have never seen, Nichols told me, and Alan J. Pakula, who later directed Redford in "All the President's Men," said of him at that time, "He had the Cagney stuff, all the rage. When I first saw him as a young man, he obviously had to fight for stability."

Redford moved quickly but inauspiciously into films. "Inside Daisy Clover" and "Situation Hopeless—But Not Serious" (both made in 1965) were disasters. Even "The Chase," which had an extraordinary pedigree—book and play by Horton Foote, script by Lillian Hellman, direction by Arthur Penn, and a cast that included Marlon Brando, Jane Fonda, James Fox, Robert Duvall, and Angie Dickinson—was a flop. It was too preachy and angry, and Redford spent much of 1966 in Spain and Greece with his wife and their two young children, wondering whether he should abandon acting and try his hand at art again. He owed Paramount work, however, and in 1967 he returned to star alongside Jane Fonda in "Barefoot in the Park." He also tried out for "The Graduate," which Mike Nichols was about to direct. "I tested Bob with Candice Bergen and was heartbroken when I saw it," Nichols told me. "It was because of this thing that Redford had with women. He couldn't play a loser, because of the way he looked. I told him so, and he was . . . dispirited. I said, 'Look at it this way. Have you ever been turned down by a woman?' He said, 'What do you mean?' I said, 'My point precisely.' "

Redford was cast in another Paramount film—"Blue," a Western about a white boy raised by the Mexican bandits who had slaughtered his family. Initially, he had found the picture appealing, but en route to the location, in Texas, he decided he didn't trust a new director who had come on board and the campy tone the script seemed to be taking, so he turned around and headed back home. "I thought, Wait a minute, what am I coming out to shoot? I believed I was being jacked around. I wasn't getting the pages. They kept saying, 'Oh, these are green pages, we're trying to turn them into gold' "—"gold" being Hollywood's hopeful nomenclature for a script page that's ready to shoot. He walked the picture, Paramount sued, Paramount won, and he didn't work for a year.

He was cast as a maverick, someone who had sabotaged a film. His friend Richard Schickel, the critic and filmmaker, told me, "He was virtually in the country of 'You'll never work in this town again.' And he was doing it from a place where he had no great financial resources. I remember sitting in the apartment that he and Lola and the kids had on Eighty-sixth and Madison. There was dust everywhere, they were remodelling, and suddenly Bob couldn't pay for it."

At that moment, Redford was a young actor whose career had stalled. "It's parts," Nichols told me. "Everybody who does it knows it's about parts. Nobody—even those in the business—can ever quite separate the dancer from the dance." Except that in Redford's case it was about more than just the wrong parts. He'd challenged the system and lost.

"You come to a sign in the road that says, 'Go left,' and you think to yourself, I'd rather go right," Redford said. "Do that often enough and you find yourself in a bad place."

Meanwhile, Twentieth Century Fox was sitting on a property that people thought could turn Redford into a major star, but the studio didn't want to give it to him. Fox was said to have paid William Goldman three hundred and fifty thousand dollars—an unprecedented sum for an original script—for a comedy Western called "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid." Paul Newman had signed for one of the lead roles, but Richard Zanuck, the head of Fox, balked at the director George Roy Hill's insistence that Redford play the other. Zanuck wanted Brando, Steve McQueen, Warren Beatty—anyone but Redford, who he said had been given too many chances and never made it. "I'll pay you off and shelve the picture rather than cast him," Zanuck told Hill. At last, when Brando couldn't be reached and Beatty had turned down the role because he didn't fancy the idea of "getting on a horse and riding around," Newman stepped in on Redford's behalf, saying that as far as he was concerned Redford "just had the stuff," and Goldman sent a six-page telegram saying that if the entire creative team agreed on Redford then why the hell couldn't management go along with it?

Finally, Zanuck capitulated, Redford was cast, and in 1969 "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" was a tremendous commercial success, even if its critical reception was mixed. Pauline Kael described it as "the bottom of the pit." But Kael also wrote that Redford was overdue for stardom, and with the Sundance Kid Redford had achieved it. The role redefined a certain kind of Western hero—the laconic dude, the Camus cowboy, a loner holding everything in reserve until the moment of danger. What made the role especially

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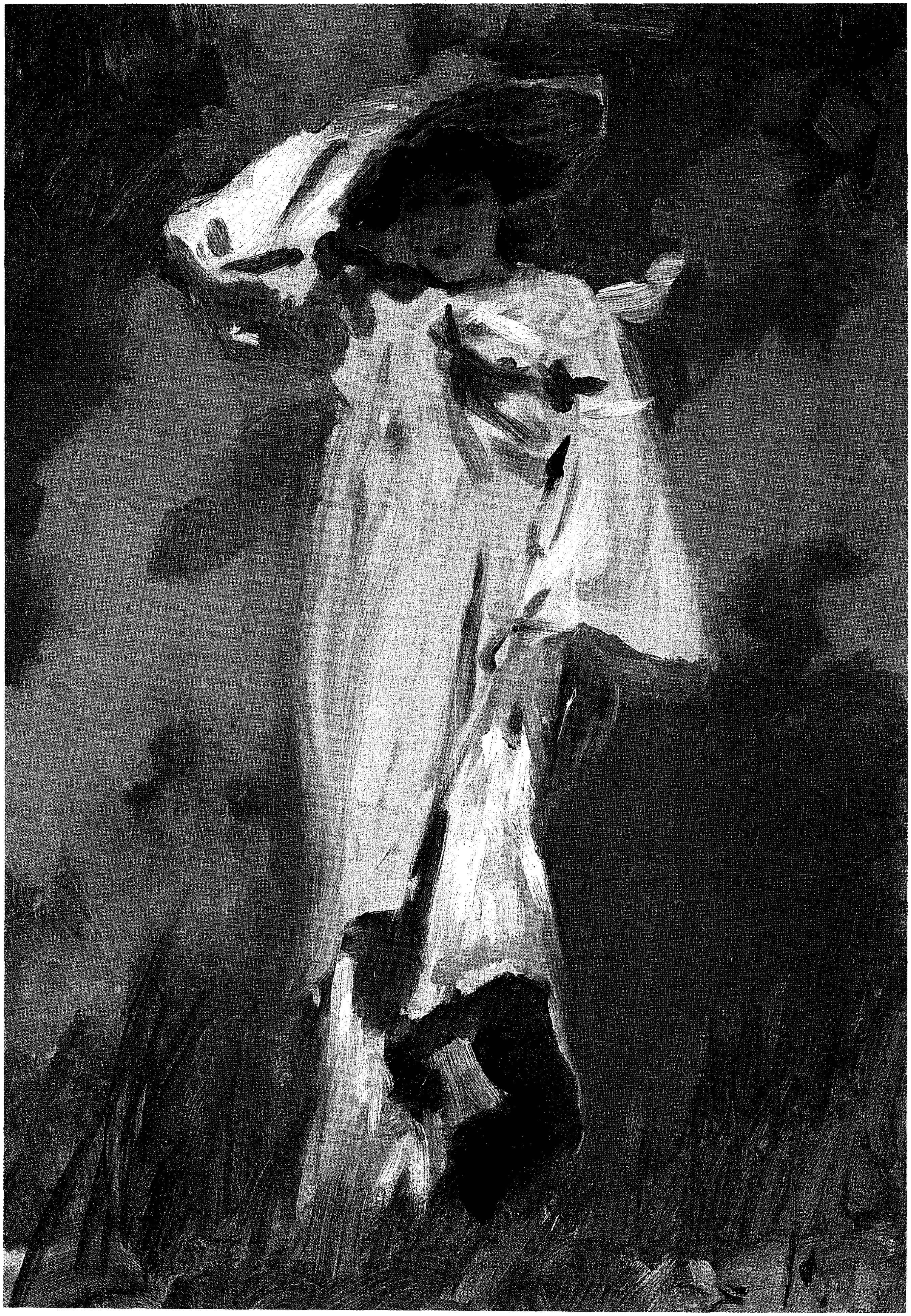
PLEIN AIR

One of the most likely places to encounter the portraits of John Singer Sargent nowadays is on the covers of novels by his contemporaries Henry James and Edith Wharton, both of whom shared his fascination with beautiful, aristocratic, and psychologically complicated women. "John Singer Sargent: The Early Portraits, Complete Paintings, Volume I" has just been published by Yale (four volumes will follow in the course of the next few years), and it features an abundance of such women (along with a few men and children), gorgeously reproduced in all their skepticism, hauteur, luxuriance, and intelligent appeal. In the portrait at right, Judith Gautier, the French writer and critic (and amoureuse of Richard Wagner), makes her way through the dunes at Saint-Enogat, in Brittany, to the water. It's Sargent at his freest—as though the exuberant wind that has sent the clouds skittering were propelling the painter's brush as well.



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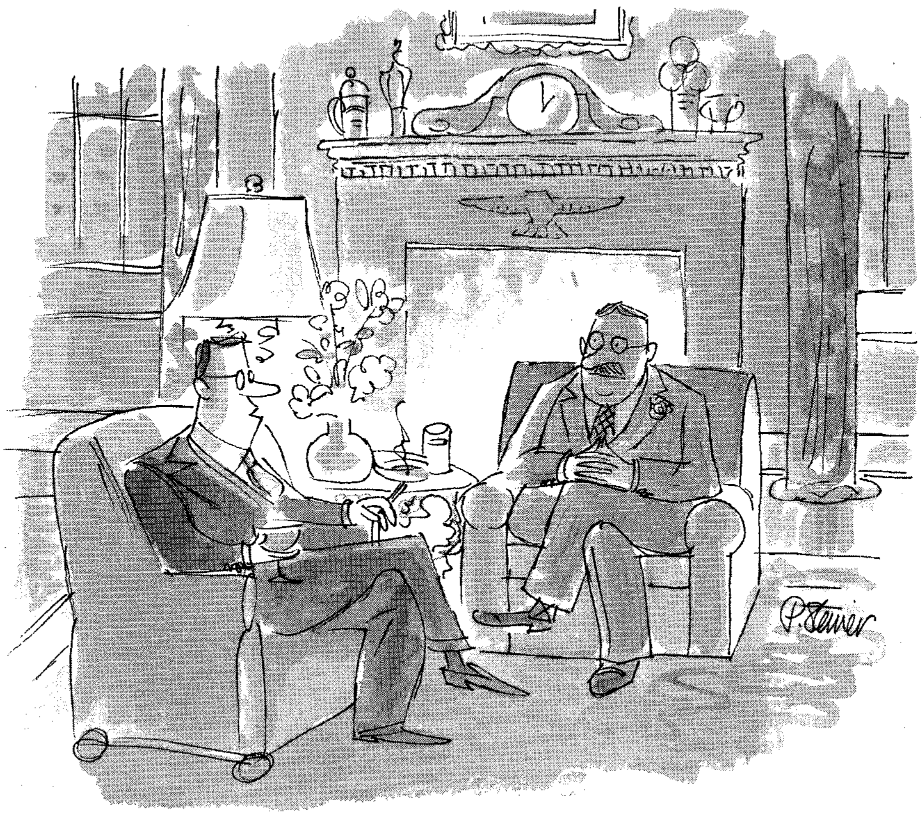

"As for immigration, I say admit anyone who arrives on the Concorde."

• •

contemporary was that Redford was so unreadable. He was elusive, tetchy, motiveless, disengaged. The film had, alas, a bad case of the cutes (Redford, for instance, sported a drooping mustache that created a woeful fashion), but it was fresh and it worked.

The burst of films that Redford made then—"Jeremiah Johnson" (he played a mountain man), "The Candidate" (a young politician), "The Way We Were" (a goy god pursued by Barbra Streisand), "The Sting" (a con man, starring again with Paul Newman in one of the most profitable movies ever made), "The Great Gatsby" (the title role), "The Great Waldo Pepper" (a daredevil flyer), and "Three Days of the Condor" (a C.I.A. guy who comes back from lunch to find that the staff of his entire office has been slaughtered, and whose impeccable survival instinct prompts him to kidnap Faye Dunaway)—took him beyond mere stardom: fan clubs, mobs wherever he appeared, a course at the University of Southern California titled "Redford in Films." He'd become his own story, and there was an aloof, controlled quality in the way he played all these roles. You couldn't touch him; sex was too close. Jack Nicholson, who had reportedly turned down the role of Gatsby and later regretted it, once said that he thought Redford was not believable in the part, because he didn't look as though he'd ever had to chop his way to the top of anything. He never seemed desperate, Nicholson suggested, which I don't think is quite right: the desperation was hidden beneath an act that was all polish and smiles, calculating even in its casualness—an actor forever acting the actor. Redford was a different man now. He was an entertainer, a winner suddenly with a lot of power, and the question had become "What sort of entertainer and winner should I now be?"

Some critics have regretted that Redford hasn't subsequently taken bigger chances in the range of parts he's played. "I've been told that there's a crazy guy there," David Thomson, the author of "A Biographical Dictionary of Film," said when I spoke to him. "And it's been to his great detriment that he's never let it out, that we've never seen a much greater wildness on screen." Richard Schickel said, "Late at night, Bob once told me, 'Acting is about letting the bear loose.' But I wonder if Bob has ever let the bear loose. His performances have been, on the whole, very cool, very effective. I'd love to see him romp and stomp sometime."

In the early seventies, Redford worked non-stop, making films back to back—as if, having been raised with the notion that hard work gets results, and having been constantly told that he never did any, he was determined to surprise even himself with his diligence. For three years—1974, 1975, 1976—he was, according to the Quigley poll of movie exhibitors, America's No. 1 box-office draw. His ex-wife, Lola, told a story to a friend about walking with him down Fifth Avenue. All around them, people were saying, "That's Robert Redford," "Hey, there's Robert Redford with some woman," "Hey, Bob!" The strange thing, she recalled, was that Redford himself didn't notice. He had trained himself to be oblivious. The bear had gone into hibernation. "Redford at this time was not just the biggest movie star in the world. He was a phenomenon," Goldman says in "Adventures in the Screen Trade." "No star, at least in my time in the movies, has ever had such heat focussed on him." During this entire period, however, Redford the Hollywood phenomenon was focussing his attention on a very un-Hollywood endeavor: making a film about Watergate.

THROUGH the window that looked onto Stage A at Skywalker Ranch, I could see the huge image of Redford's face onscreen. The sound-mixing crew was preparing for a screening the following week; it was an important one, because it would be the final opportunity for any further adjustments. Redford and I were in his office, and, sitting across from me, he was excited and animated, talking about the genesis of "All the President's Men."

In order to explain that movie, Redford said, he had to loop back to another one, "The Candidate," a political satire made in late 1971. As he talked, he moved about the office with an athlete's bouncy springiness, arranging some papers on his desk. He was wearing glasses, as he usually does, except

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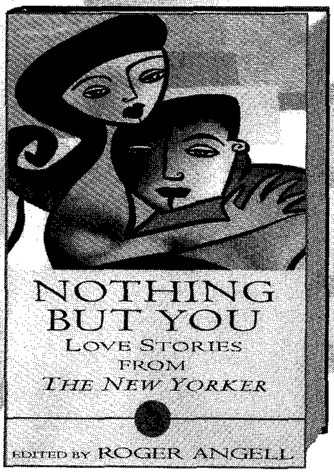

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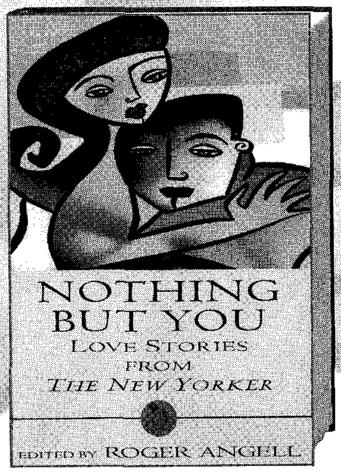

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Illustration: Liselotte Watkins

when appearing in public or in a film, and it always seems to be a different pair; these were tortoiseshell. He was saying, "In the nineteen-seventies, there was a feeling that you could make a difference. There was something of the nineteen-sixties idealism, and I found that I wanted to play a part that addressed bigger issues. And maybe 'The Candidate' was the start of that for me."

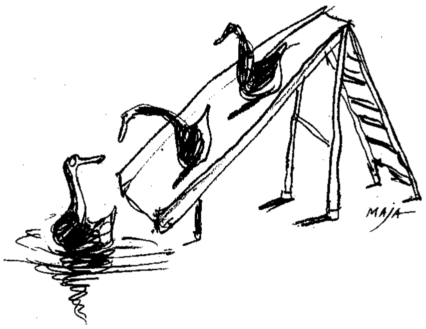
"The Candidate," which Redford produced, is one of his best screen performances. The movie is an astringent study of a Kennedyesque campaigning attorney named Bill McKay, his entry into a Senate race, and the moral compromises he has to make to get elected in the new, cosmetic, media-oriented world of politics. Redford the man—a charismatic and apparently unreflecting success—perfectly suited the role that he took on.

The film was scheduled for release the following July, at the time of the Democratic National Convention, in Miami Beach, Redford said, and so, as a gimmick to promote it, he mounted his own whistle-stop campaign, planning to ride a train from Jacksonville to Miami Beach, making four stops. "I'd get on the back, quiet them down, go, 'Hey, everybody, thank you, thank you, I have a piece of paper saying how many people came to see each candidate on their stops. I'm told that Ed Muskie when he came through here drew two hundred and fifty people. George McGovern came through and it was twelve hundred. By all accounts today, there are at least four thousand of you out there, and this means a great deal to my heart, I can't tell you what this does for my ego. And just keep in mind as we pull out of here today that I have nothing to say, I have absolutely nothing to say.' And I still remember the look on their faces as the train was pulling out, like that could really be the truth."

He recalls that at one stop he stepped back into the train, joining the journalists inside. What a no-brainer job they've got, he thought. But the journalists weren't talking about Redford and his publicity stunt; there had been a break-in at the Watergate Hotel. "They said, 'Well, it's clear what's going on. It's Nixon.' I said, 'You mean they broke into, the President's people broke into . . .' I was acting like this naïve Boy Scout, and they came back to me with 'Let me tell you, son, about some things you don't understand.' "

The journalists' lesson in Realpolitik included their conviction that in the weeks before the election no paper would properly report the story—no editor would want to get on the wrong side of Nixon, who was a mean and hateful s.o.b. and could make covering Washington impossible. When Redford quit the junket, he continued to follow the story. By the fall, people were starting to ask, Well, who are these guys from the Washington *Post*? "One guy was a Jew, the other guy a Wasp, one guy was a Republican, the other guy wasn't, one guy was a good writer, the other guy couldn't write his way out of a paper bag. And they had to work together?" Redford said. "Forget that they seemed to be wrong; I thought that was great stuff."

He imagined a small-budget, behind-the-scenes black-and-white film about investigative journalism, about what it takes, the diligence, the digging. "I was interested in the Americanness of that—the Calvinist work ethic." When Redford finally got Woodward on the phone, "I introduced myself, and Woodward was cool—very guarded. 'We'll get back to you,' he said." Redford found himself in the unusual situation of waiting for someone else—waiting for some months, in fact, until he was in Chicago, making "The Sting." It was then that James McCord, one of the Watergate burglars, spilled the beans and confirmed that much of what Woodward and Bernstein had been writing was true. Suddenly, after having been vilified, the two were redeemed. "I called Woodward and got him on the phone again and said, 'I'm sorry, I'm coming to see you, O.K.? This is really getting interesting.' "



As Redford was telling me the story, his eyes brightened, and he began stringing together longer, faster, and more energetic sentences, almost as if he were speaking in the style of Tom Wolfe or Gay Talese or one of the other New Journalists of the late sixties. He laughed, clapping his hands, ignoring calls from the sound crew that another reel was ready. He jumped up, answered a phone call, and sat down again, suddenly boyish and filled with an enormously likable enthusiasm. "Woodward told me where to meet him. I said, 'Your office?' He said, 'No.' I said, 'How about your house?' He said, 'No.' I said, 'A hotel room, then?' He said, 'Absolutely not.' "

They arranged to meet at a political fund-raiser in Washington, and Redford flew in on a Saturday, when he wasn't shooting. Redford was becoming so animated that his speech slipped into the present tense. "Suddenly, people are giving me a hard time about 'The Candidate.' Ethel Kennedy comes up and says, 'I really don't know about that film.' I say, 'Why?' She says, 'Well, it's a pretty bleak, dark look at what's the highest calling in the land.' I was getting some heat, and suddenly out of nowhere there's this guy in my face, says, 'Hi. Bob Woodward.' I go, 'Oh.' He says, 'Just keep talking.' "

Soon after, Woodward and Bernstein came to see Redford at his apartment in New York and told him where the story was going. Redford was now privy to an amazing inside deal. They told him that they were planning to write a book, which would focus on the burglars, and tell the story from their point of view, like a novel. According to Redford, he said no, that was the wrong approach—they should tell their own story, as journalists, including all their mistakes and false leads. Woodward and Bernstein went to their editor, Alice Mayhew, at Simon & Schuster, who agreed that Redford's idea was better and added that, besides, it would lead to a better book, and a more lucrative movie sale. Woodward and Bernstein were then advised to make Redford wait, and he waited for nearly a year, watching the news while he made "The Great Gatsby."

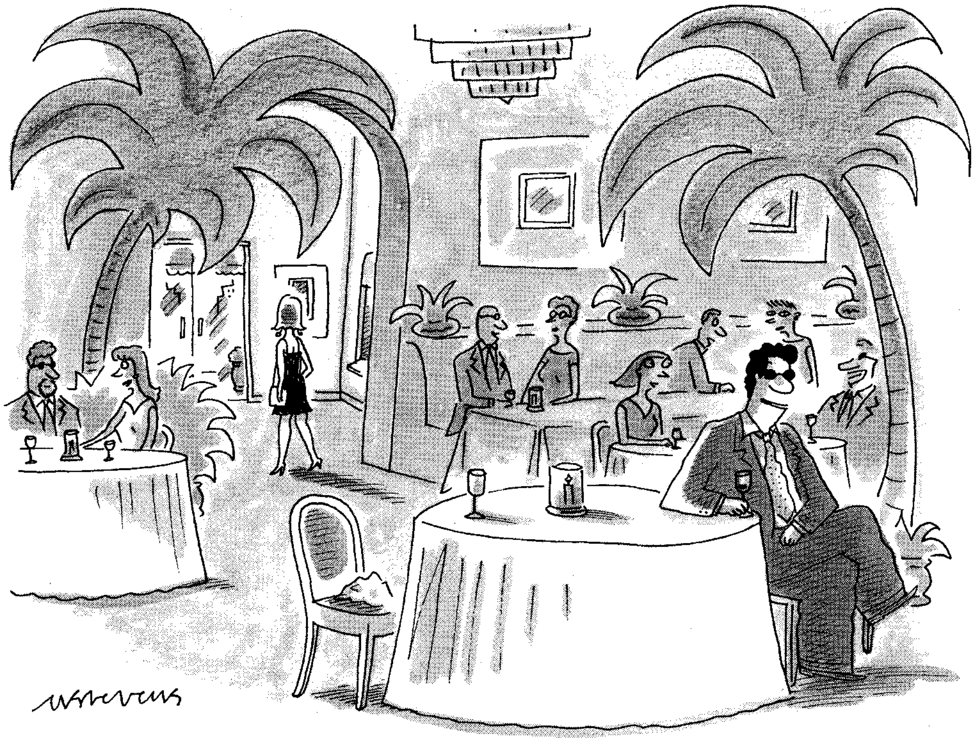
Another of the sound guys appeared, and Redford stood, wrapping up the tale, shaking his head as if he still couldn't believe he'd been a part of it. "I watched this unfold, I was with them in the car while they were chasing the story on Colson, chasing this wonderful, monstrous thing," he said. During the last thirty or so minutes, Redford had been talking about himself as if he were the bemused, questing hero of a thriller that is his own life, in which Bob Redford steers himself through the labyrinthine shallows of stardom, away from the fatal temptations of the mass marketplace, and vaults the fence of high seriousness. The next morning, when I went, as was routine, to sit alongside him while he directed the sound-mixing crew, he was still eager to talk about "All the President's Men." He told me that he'd made the movie to celebrate the First Amendment, and to show how close America came to losing it. "Journalism—whatever you think of it—saved it in that particular instance. I was grateful for the journalistic standard we had. And now I see it go—willfully, and for the cheapest, short-term reason, which is money. Am I going to complain about money in America, what money has done to our systems of justice and education and politics? Forget it. That's like baying at the moon. On the other hand, it does piss you off.

"The real impact of the movie was seen in journalism schools, which swelled, because suddenly they promised romance and glamour. But the people now being drawn to journalism were there not for reasons of the craft or its ethical mandate but to become celebrities themselves—to find a way of taking someone's clothes off, publicly, and getting money and attention for doing it. I wonder. Maybe that film did a disservice to history. I dunno."

I called Bob Woodward, who is now the assistant managing editor of the Washington *Post*. He said, as if he were Bob Woodward still being played by Robert Redford, "Are you tape recording this conversation?" I said I wasn't; I was taking notes. Of working with Redford, Woodward said, "I knew that he was serious. But not that serious. He's a total package of seriousness. He immersed himself in the subject to a degree that was astonishing. He really brought off that movie himself. It never would have happened if he hadn't said, 'I'm going to do this,' and pushed it through. He's learned how to compensate for his own intellectual insecurity to the point that he reads and studies a subject until he gets through to its innards. He's one of a kind."

I remembered something that Redford's longtime assistant, Donna Kail, had said to me. Before Redford, she worked for one of his business managers, who once told her how smart Redford was. "It was the way he said it: 'Redford's smart.' That stuck. And when I came to work for him I realized that he's tough, too. He doesn't realize how tough he can be." No one in Hollywood has stories about tantrums Redford has thrown, or binges he's been on, or outrageous things he has demanded. The bad things that are said about him revolve around his self-centeredness. He's left behind him a string of broken hearts—James Salter ("Downhill Racer"), William Goldman ("Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid," "The Great Waldo Pepper," and "All the President's Men"), Steven Soderbergh ("sex, lies & videotape")—who all have stories of abandonment, stories that they've told, in print, with differing degrees of ruefulness or bitterness. This, of course, is the traditional lot of the writer in Hollywood, to be betrayed by the director or the producer or the star, but Redford's own highly driven self-centeredness has a curious, otherworldly quality; his narcissism is almost godly.

The quality was illustrated for me during my stay at Skywalker. I was in Redford's office, chatting with Karen Tenkhoff, his associate producer. Redford came in and appeared to be shocked, just for a blink, that these two minor planets in his system—Tenkhoff and me—had collided and were talking with each other. He looked quizzically at Tenkhoff, as though noticing her for the first time. Then he said that he really knew nothing about her, even though they'd spent such a lot of time working together. After the movie was over, Redford continued, they must sit down and talk. "I know about Rick," he said, and I wondered whether he was doing this for my benefit, letting me know that he related to his co-workers in such an intimate and jolly way, or whether he was doing something more blunt and seemingly un-Redford-like: taking control of the conversation. "Yes," Redford continued.



"The sound of violins, the night, the wine, the ambience—but most of all, Louise, you!"

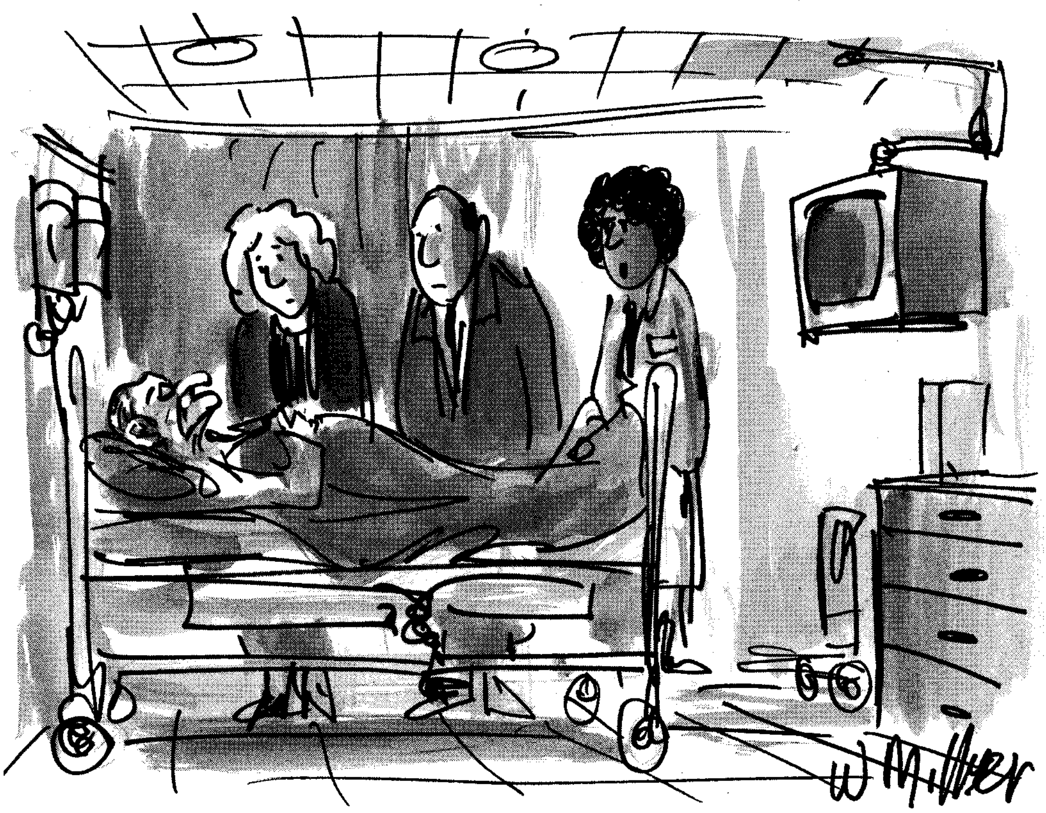
"There's a Rick. Who's this Rick?"

"Rick?" she asked.

"Yes, Rick? Who's this Rick in your life?"

"Rick," said Tenkhoff flatly, "is the man who does my hair."

"Oh," said Redford. And then he laughed, hard, as if he'd been caught out pretending he could be anybody but Robert Redford.



"He didn't have any last words. He just sang the national anthem and then went blank."

THE first two hundred pages of the yet-to-be-completed manuscript of "The Horse Whisperer," by Nicholas Evans, were already on offer to British publishers when they surfaced in New York in the fall of 1994, were clandestinely photocopied by movie scouts, and were distributed among Los Angeles producers in a matter of days. Scott Rudin, uninvited, made a bid of five hundred thousand dollars. Then others joined the unofficial frenzy: Jon Peters; Wendy Finerman (the producer of "Forrest Gump") and Peter Guber; and Redford's company, Wildwood Enterprises, led by Rachel Pfeffer. By the middle of the week, bidding had pushed the price to a million seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and the next morning it reached three million. At this point, Creative Artists Agency, which was now brokering the deal, called a halt, worried that an insane precedent was about to be set for what was, after all, only half a book. It was arranged that Nicholas Evans would speak to each of the bidders and choose among them.

I remember hearing the story at the time and guessing at the likely outcome; now, having met Redford, I understand that it wasn't really much of a contest at all. The first time Redford turns the full pressure of his attention on you, it's disconcerting. He knows how best to use his stardom. With Evans, he didn't use it at all. He talked to him about horses, and about Zen. Ironically—or so one Hollywood story has it—Redford hadn't even read the pages; but he would have recognized the appeal of the character.

"He was silent, apart, a modern cowboy. A character so centered, so simple," Redford told me. Here was a man, Tom Booker, whom he could put on like a comfy old coat. Booker was the Sundance Kid, older, carrying a lasso rather than a six-gun, a sad perfectionist aware that history was bearing down on his way of life. In Redford's eyes, he wasn't Booker so much as Booker was someone he would like to be. "He has a stronger, more centered self than I do," Redford said. "I envy him that. Maybe I, too, am aiming for the security of a simple life."

Although John Huston once flattered Redford by saying that he picked his roles with "a rare canniness," the actor has often been more cautious than canny, more ambivalent than sure. He's generally ended up making good choices—at least, good commercial ones—even though he's sometimes driven people crazy with his angst and indecisiveness while protecting his hand. Playing a part is no simple issue for him. For a long time, he thought the script for "The Way We Were" was tripe until his character, Hubbell Gardiner, a Wasp jock with a talent but no genius for writing, was made less sympathetic; the change helped make the film. He didn't want to do "Indecent Proposal," but his agent at the time, Mike Ovitz, persuaded him (and also traded a portion of Redford's salary for a share in the gross profit, earning the star a fortune when the movie made two hundred and sixty-six million dollars). He withdrew from both "An American President" and from Ridley Scott's "The Hot Zone." He read "Air Force One" and dismissed it for being too violent.

"Redford's always had a great quality of incorruptible masculinity, and his whole quality is American," Paul Newman said. "It's about a rugged individualism, which is something I'm not always in favor of."

Redford has always been attracted to characters whose survival depends on figuring out the Chinese box that is the system, and to films that celebrate outsiders and independence, entrepreneurial concepts as well as abidingly American and romantic ones. It was only after listening to him talk about “All the President’s Men” that I realized that this was the type of story he most wants to tell, and that while he hasn’t been able to find another film that bucks the system so powerfully he’s continued to be interested in those that both rub abrasively against the ideological grain and stand determinedly off to the side of Hollywood’s current fascination with big events (“Independence Day,” for example, or “Titanic”). The films he’s directed tend to express the depressive, black-Irish side of his nature. “Ordinary People” and “Quiz Show” are not happy films, and neither is “A River Runs Through It,” his sombre version of the Norman MacLean memoir about fly-fishing. The autobiographical theme of familial loss runs through all three.

“The Horse Whisperer” ’s first screenwriter was Eric Roth, who had won an Oscar for “Forrest Gump.” Roth told me that when he met Redford he felt he was seeing an icon, an icon about to play an icon of his own creation. “That is, the great Western loner plays the Western loner,” Roth said. And, fittingly, in their first meetings, the talk was about Westerns they liked. Roth mentioned “Giant,” with James Dean and directed by George Stevens, and Redford came back with “Shane,” also by Stevens. They discussed John Ford, and some fifties Robert Mitchum movies. Roth spent a lot of time in Montana, where the novel is set, to get a sense of the place. At the time, the book was still unfinished, so the question of how the movie would end was open from the start, although Redford knew that the author intended to kill off the Tom Booker character. (In the final pages of the novel, Booker dies while rescuing Grace, who finds herself caught between two fighting stallions.) Roth and Redford also went to and fro about whether Annie and Booker should make love. There was a no-fuck draft, a one-fuck draft, a two-fuck draft, a three-fuck draft, and a draft that involved a fuck on a mountaintop.

Eventually, Roth left the project, and was replaced by Richard LaGravenese (“The Fisher King” and “The Bridges of Madison County”). Redford brought LaGravenese to his place in Utah and was so keen for him to see “Shane” that he forgot to offer him anything to eat. Redford said, “What I remembered from seeing that movie as a kid was that the main character didn’t talk a lot. He carried his history around with him. Silence is in the very grain of American ranch life. Understatement is part of the deal.”

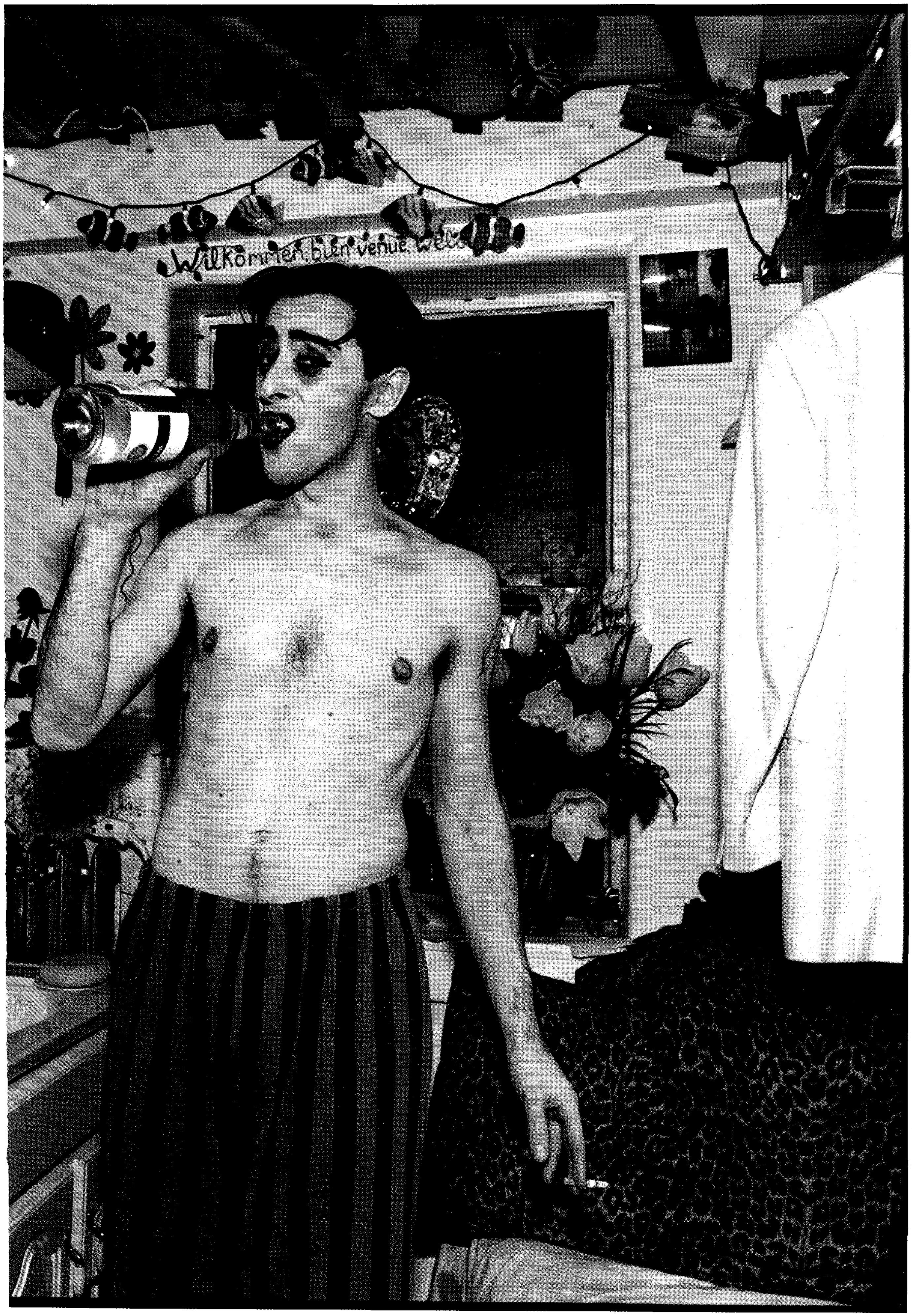
As LaGravenese’s drafts got closer to a final version, the instructions from Redford were all variations on the same thing: “Strip it back”; “Pare it down”; “Have Tom talk as concisely as possible.” What he and Redford ended up with was a no-fuck version, with as little dialogue and as clear an emotional line as the many story arches of “The Horse Whisperer” would allow. “ ‘Shane’ was useful because of its simplicity, and because most of the film’s work is done with images,” LaGravenese told me. “Redford described the Western man as someone who is deeply feeling, who embraces life as something he doesn’t try to control, a larger order that he’s a part of. Urban man, on the other hand, he saw as someone who believes he can control things. Redford himself is an intriguing mixture of the two.”

By the time I met with Redford at Skywalker, three years had passed since the film rights to “The Horse Whisperer” had been bought. In the interim, the book had become a phenomenon, thanks in part to Redford’s intervention; the book deal, with Delacorte, which paid more than three mil-

DARK VICTORY

Celebrating the opening night of Sam Mendes’s Broadway revival of “Cabaret,” the masterly Scottish actor Alan Cumming—who turns in an electrifying performance as the Emcee of the Kit Kat Klub—brings a whiff of Weimar with him backstage. Cool, pale, and lethally ironic in the role, he strikes an appropriately disenchanted pose in his dressing room, where his character’s sardonic anthem is printed on the wall behind him. Connoisseurs of collapse will note the glitter around his nipples and his cosmetic bruises, still visible from the evening’s sinister display of decadence.

Photograph by Amy Arbus



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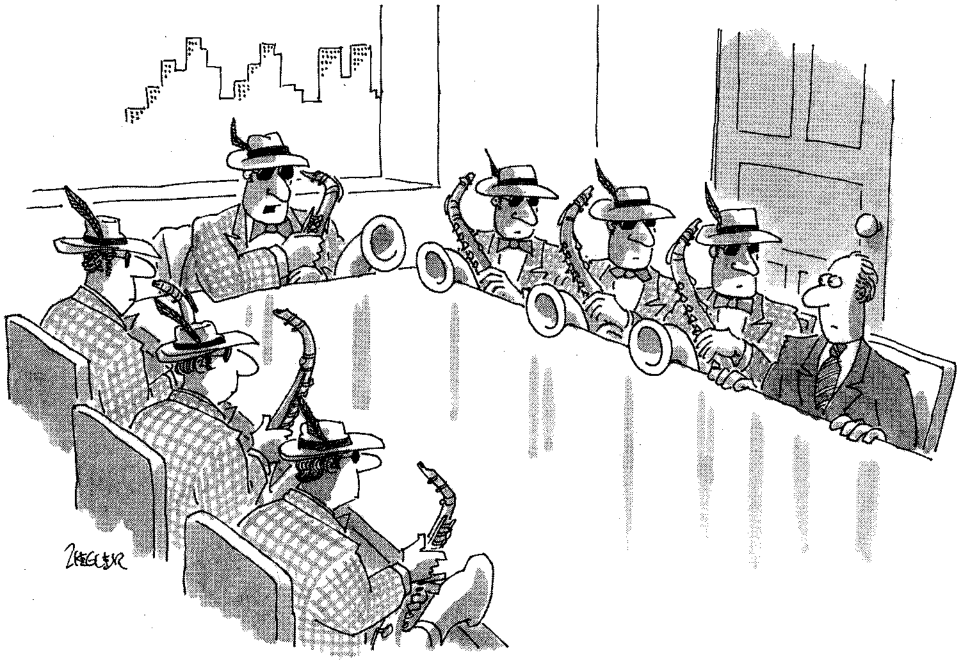


"Damn it, Hopkins, didn't you get yesterday's memo?"

• •

lion dollars for the American rights, was done only a few days after the movie deal. There were now more than ten million copies in print. The project had become so big that it was starting to make Redford uncomfortable: failure might affect his independence and his ability to carry through on other projects. Sitting in front of the mixing board on Stage A, pencil and pad in hand, he made notes on the final two reels of "The Horse Whisperer," including the climactic scene, in which Grace gets back on her horse, and the ensuing one, in which the threads of the story are gathered and wrapped up—"hopefully in not too neat a bow," Redford said.

Then, suddenly, Redford was on his feet. He had an idea; he was bothered by something. He started talking to Karen Tenkhoff about putting back in a highly charged goodbye scene between Grace and Tom Booker that had been taken out more than three months earlier, when the movie was over three and a half hours long.

A silence fell throughout the theatre.

"When I brood about something past a certain point, it's worth bringing up," Redford said.

Tenkhoff, who'd told me that the producer's demand was always a simple one—"Faster, better, cheaper," she'd said—wished that they'd talked about this before.

"We did," Redford said.

Tenkhoff said that she'd thought the idea was to underscore the goodbye in what they referred to as the hobbling scene: when Booker, having brought the wild, seemingly untamable horse to its knees, cajoles the one-legged Grace into mounting it again.

"We can even have a good battle about it," Redford said with an easy smile. "I know it's a pain in the ass, but I wouldn't be true to myself if I didn't put it out there."

This confrontation resolved itself with the perfectionist Redford disappearing upstairs to the cutting room with the film editor, and emerging two hours later with two different endings—one with the Grace-goodbye scene and the other without. These were then viewed, and Redford asked everybody what they thought.

Gary Rydstrom, the sound designer, said, "There's no right or wrong answer."

"Yes, there is. But you don't have to take responsibility for it," Redford said, with no suggestion of an edge. Even though the reinserted scene had been edited down (it lasted a little more than two minutes), the proposed change was a radical one. Less than a month before "The Horse Whisperer" was to be nationally released, Redford was tinkering with the most significant part of the movie—its ending. LaGravenese told me that he'd always seen "The Horse Whisperer" as Annie's story, a love story between two adults, but Redford's gut was now telling him that the story might be Grace's, that it might be a girl's story. After all, she rides the horse, she falls from it, she has to be healed.

"THE HORSE WHISPERER" is a contemporary Western romance—and that, more than anything else, accounts for its appeal to Redford. Redford's own romance with the West—characteristically obsessive, conscientious, and serious—has, in the view of many, gone some way to changing the way we think about it. The romance was first expressed nearly forty years ago, when Redford and his wife bought two acres in what was then a deserted bit of canyon. A few years later, they built an A-frame cabin, rolling boulders up the mountain themselves for the foundation. In the late sixties, when Redford saw corporations start to move in, he concluded that to preserve his canyon he had to buy his canyon; then the canyon, once purchased, had to be paid for and used. He expanded an existing small resort, and started up the nonprofit Sundance Film Labs, where experienced filmmakers took time out to come and teach younger ones the craft. Quentin Tarantino's "Reservoir Dogs" was developed there, as was "Hard Eight," the first film by Paul Thomas Anderson, who went on to write and direct "Boogie Nights."

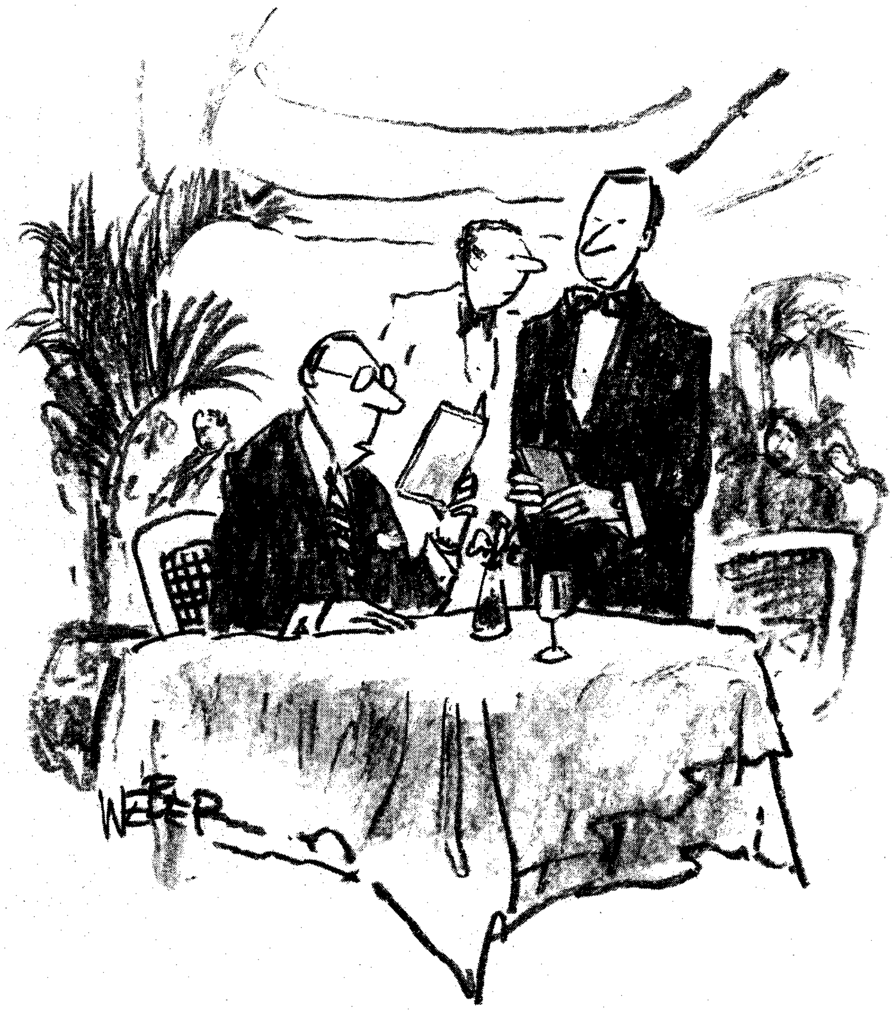
More followed. Redford appropriated the United States Film Festival, moved it to Park City in 1985, and eventually renamed it the Sundance Film Festival. The objective was to encourage diversity in American cinema; the result was a success that no one foresaw—a success that, especially in the last few years, Hollywood has been frenziedly attempting to coöpt. The current media cliché about Sundance depicts frantic movie executives on skis, barking commands into their cell phones and bragging that they've found the next Tarantino. Atom Egoyan, the director of "The Sweet Hereafter," told me, "I do think the spirit with which Redford has started the festival is completely genuine, and inspiring. He's probably as concerned as I am that it's become such a free-for-all. It's become every independent filmmaker's fantasy: You go, you hit the jackpot, you get the big Hollywood deal."

Redford has more plans. While I was at Skywalker, he met with architects who had flown in from New York to discuss a proposal for a Sundance cinema chain, starting up within the next year or so in New York, Austin, Chicago, Seattle, and Philadelphia. Each one will have a bookstore, a café, and a film library for research, as well as movie theatres. Redford's model, curiously, is the City Lights bookstore, in San Francisco. "I stumbled in once, years ago, looking for jazz, and thought, Wait a minute, this is a bummer. There were these weird guys sitting on a stage babbling in a way that made no sense—and suddenly something happened. It was Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder. The space was nothing—minimal. It didn't matter. Something was happening."

Redford is not a Beat poet, of course, even though he sometimes wears T-shirts and a beret. He owns a cable-TV channel and a mail-order Sundance business. (The current catalogue opens with a letter from Redford about "The Horse Whisperer": "It's about many things—about family, loss, survival, and the power of the Western landscape. . . . I'm proud of the film and hope you enjoy it.") He has—it's no exaggeration to say—an empire. "Nobody has to be Vincent van Gogh anymore; Bob gets that," Harvey Weinstein, the head of Miramax Films, told me, and it's true that Redford's entire career in the eighties and nineties has been a balance between art and commerce, preservation and development, independent films and the Hollywood system. The tension has produced its ironies and unexpected side effects. "A River Runs Through It" dangerously swelled the banks of American rivers with novice fishermen. It seems likely that Redford's loving rendition of ranch life in "The Horse Whisperer" (the rural family here is as functional and perfect as the suburban one in "Ordinary People" was tortured and repressed) will have a similar effect on western Montana, filling it with even more people in a nostalgic search for American rapture and simplicity. "The Horse Whisperer" is Robert Redford's Montana, beautiful but tamer than any place could ever be. After all, the movie has been paid for and marketed by Disney.

What is Redford's achievement? He is not radical or original but clear-sighted, coherent, and resourceful—Western qualities, rather than urban ones. He doesn't have the frenzy or abandon of the genuinely creative artist he once dreamed of being. He's not wild onscreen. He battled his demons, beat them, and hasn't let them out again. You rarely come away from a Redford performance exhilarated. You might, however, come away charmed or impressed; you might come away moved; you will often have been made to think. He makes unusually intelligent films for the mass market. His subject might be the family, or politics, or the system, or love, but he always assumes a belief in what one man can do, which is at the heart of the American dream as much as it is at the heart of what Redford has created for himself.

In the last twenty years, he's acted in only ten films, including "The Horse Whisperer." He's not tabloid fodder; on the contrary, he's a privacy freak, very careful about himself and his life and what he does. Once I had thought for a while about Redford, I realized that he lived in my mind as much more than a celebrity or a superior combination of actor and director. He is there more on the level of metaphor than of fact. He has been instrumental in fashioning some of America's most defining contemporary images: the investigative reporter, the loner, the defender of the unregulated outdoors, the opponent of mindless corporate culture, the independent filmmaker, the fly-fisherman, the athlete. Like the hero of "The Natural," he's the man with the magic bat, and he's contrived to make us pull for him. ♦



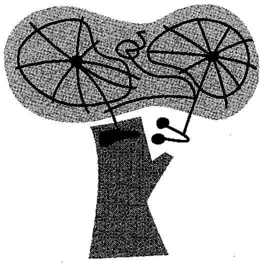
"I'm a lawyer, so I'll try the torte."

FICTION

THE END OF FIRPO IN THE WORLD

Cody's last stand.

BY GEORGE SAUNDERS



THE boy on the bike flew by the Chink's house, and the squatty-body's house, and the house where the dead guy had rotted for five days, remembering that the Chink had once called him nasty, and the squatty-body had once called the cops when he'd hit her cat with a lug nut on a string, and the chick in the dead guy's house had once asked if he, Cody, ever brushed his teeth. Someday when he'd completed the invention of his special miniaturizing ray he would shrink their houses and flush them down the shitter while in tiny voices all three begged for some sophisticated mercy, but he would only say, Sophisticated? When were you ever sophisticated to me? And from the toilet bowl they would say, Well yes, you're right, we were pretty mean, flush us down, we deserve it; but no, at the last minute he would pluck them out and place them in his lunchbox so he could send them on secret missions such as putting hideous boogers of assassination in Lester Finn's thermos if Lester Finn ever again asked him in Civics why his rear smelled like hot cotton with additional crap cling-ons.

It was a beautiful, sunny day and the aerobics class at the Rec had let out and cars were streaming out of the parking lot with sun glinting off their hoods, and he rode along on the sidewalk, racing the cars as they passed.

Here was the low-hanging willow where you had to duck down, here was the place with the tilty sidewalk square that served as a ramp when you jerked hard on the handlebars, which he did, and the crowd went wild, and the announcers in the booth above the willow shook their heads and said, Wow, he takes that jump like there's no tomorrow while them other racers fret about it like tiny crying babies!

Were the Dalmeyers home?

Their gray car was still in the driveway. He would need to make another lap.

Yesterday he had picked up a bright-red goalie pad and all three Dalmeyers had screamed at him, Not that pad Cody you dick, we never use those pads in the driveway because they get scuffed, you rectum, those are only for ice, were you born a rectal shitbrain or did you take special rectal shitbrain lessons, in rectal shitbrain lessons did they teach you how to ruin everybody's things?

Well yes, he had ruined a few Dalmeyer things in his life, he had yes pounded a railroad spike in a good new volleyball, he had yes secretly scraped a ski with a nail, he had yes given the Dalmeyer dog Rudy a cut on its leg with a shovel, but that had been an accident, he'd thrown the shovel at a rosebush and stupid Rudy had walked in front of it.

And the Dalmeyers had snatched away the goalie pad and paraded around the driveway making the nosehole sound, and when he tried to laugh to show he was a good sport he made the nosehole sound for real, and they totally cracked up, and Zane Dalmeyer said why didn't he take his trademark nosehole sound on Broadway so thousands could crap their pants laughing? And Eric Dalmeyer said hey if only he had like fifty different-sized noseholes that each made a different sound then he could play songs. And they laughed so hard at the idea of him playing songs on Broadway on his fifty different-sized noseholes that they fell to the driveway thrashing their idiotic Dalmeyer limbs, even Ginnie, the baby Dalmeyer, and ha ha ha that had been a laugh, that had been so funny he had almost gone around one two three four and smashed their cranial cavities with his off-brand gym shoes, which were another puzzling dilemmoid, because why did he have Arroes when every single Dalmeyer, even Ginnie, had the Nikes with the lights in the heel that lit up?

Fewer cars were coming by now from the Rec; the ones that did were going faster, and he no longer tried to race them.

Oh, it would be revenge, sweet revenge, when he stuck the lozenge stolen from wood shop up the Dalmeyers' water hose, and the next time they turned the hose on it exploded, and all the Dalmeyers, even Dad Dalmeyer, stood around in their nice tan pants puzzling over it like them guys on "Nova." And the Dalmeyers were so stupid they would conclude that it had been a miracle, and would call some guys from a science lab to confirm the miracle, and one of the lab guys would flip the wooden lozenge into the air and say to Dad Dalmeyer, You know what, a very clever Einstein lives in your neighborhood and I suggest that in the future you lock this hose up, because in all probability this guy cannot be stopped. And he, Cody, would give the lab guy a wink and later, when they were walking away, the lab guy would say, Look, why not come live with us in the experimental space above our lab and help us discover some amazing compounds with the same science brain that thought up this brilliant lozenge, because, frankly, when we lab guys were your age, no way, this lozenge concept was totally beyond us, we were just playing with baby toys and doing baby math, but you, you're really something scientifically special.

And when the Dalmeyers came for a lab tour with a school group they would approach him with their big confident underwater watches and say wow oh boy had they ever missed the boat in terms of him, sorry, they were so very sorry, what was this beaker for, how did this burner work, was it really true that he had built a whole entire *T. Rex* from scratch and energized it by taming the miraculous power of cosmic thunder? And down in the basement the *T. Rex* would rear up its ugly head and want to have a Dalmeyer snack, but using his special system of codes, pounding on a heat pipe a different number of times for each alphabet letter, he would tell the *T. Rex*, No no no, don't eat a single Dalmeyer, although why

ANDERS WENNGREN

not lift Eric Dalmeyer up just for the fun of it on the tip of your tremendous green snout and give him a lesson in what kind of power those crushing jaws would have if he, Cody, pounded out on the heat pipe Kill Kill Kill.

Pedalling wildly now, he passed into the strange and dangerous zone of three consecutive MonteVistas, and inside of each lived an old wop in a dago tee, and sometimes in the creepy trees there were menacing gorillas he took potshots at from bikeback, but not today, he was too busy with revenge to think about monkeys, and then he was out, into the light, coasting into a happier zone of forthright and elephantine BuenoVerdes that sat very honestly with the big open eyes that were their second-story windows, and in his mind as he passed he said hello HELLO to the two elephants and they in turn said to him in kind Dumbo voices hey Cody HEY CODY.

THE block was shaped something like South America and as he took the tight turn that was Cape Horn he looked across The Field to his small yellow house, which was neither MonteVista nor BuenoVerde, but predated the subdivision and smelled like cat pee and hamburger blood and had recently been christened by Ma's boyfriend Daryl, that dick, The House of FIRPO, FIRPO being the word Daryl used to describe anything he, Cody, did that was bad or dorky. Sometimes Mom and Daryl tried to pretend FIRPO was a lovey-dovey term by tousling his hair when they said it but other times they gave him a poke or pinch and sometimes when they thought he couldn't hear they whispered very darkly and meanly to one another FIRP attack in progress and he would go to his room and make the nosehole sound in his closet, after which they would come in and fine him a quarter for each nosehole sound they thought they had heard him make, which was often many, many more than he had actually really made.

Sometimes at night in his room Mom babied him by stroking his big wide head and saying he didn't have to pay all the quarters he owed for making the nosehole sound, but other times she said if he didn't knock it off and lose a few pounds how was he ever going to get a date in junior high, because who wanted to date a big chubby nosehole snorter, and then he couldn't help it, it made him nervous to think of junior high, and he made the nosehole sound and she said, Very funny I hope you're amusing your own self because you're not amusing my ass one bit.

The Dalmeyer house now came into sight.

The Dalmeyer car was gone.

It was Go Time.

The decisive butt-kicking he was about to give the Dalmeyer hose would constitute the end of FIRPO in the world, and all, including Ma, would have to bow down before him, saying, Wow wow wow, do we ever stand corrected in terms of you, how could someone FIRPO hatch and execute such a daring manly plan?

The crowd was on its feet now, screaming his name, and he passed the Chink's house again, here was the driveway down which he must turn to cross the street to the Dalmeyers', but then oh crap he was going too fast and missed it, and the announcers in the booth above the willow gasped in pleasure at his sudden decisive decision to swerve across the newly sodded lawn of the squatty-body's house. His bike made a trough in the sod and went HUMPF over the curb, and as the white car struck him the boy and the bike flew together in a high comic arc across the street and impacted the oak on the opposite side with such violence that the bike wrapped around the tree and the boy flew back into the street.

Arghh arghh Daryl will be pissed and say Cody why are you bleeding like a stuck pig you little shit. There was something red wrong with his Arroes. At Payless when they bought the Arroes Mom said, If you squirm once more you're gonna be facedown on this carpet with my hand whacking your big fat ass. Daryl will say I buy you a good bike and what do you do, you ruin it. Ma will come up with a dish towel and start swiping at the blood and Daryl will say don't ruin that dish towel, he made his bed let him sleep in it, I'll hose him off in the yard, a little shivering won't kill him, he did the crime let him do the time. Or Ma might throw a fit like the night he slipped and fell in the school play, and Ms. Phillips said, Tell your mother, Cody, how you came to slip and fall during the school play so that everyone in the auditorium was looking at you instead of Julia who was at that time speaking her most important line.

And Mom said, Cody are you deaf?

And Ms. Phillips said, He slipped because when I told him stay out of that mopped spot did he do it? No, he did not, he walked right through it on purpose and then down he went.

Which is exactly what he does at home, Mom said. Sometimes I think he's wired wrong.

And Ms. Phillips said, Well, today, Cody, you learned a valuable lesson which is if someone tells you don't do something, don't do it, because maybe that someone knows something you don't from having lived a longer time than you.

And Daryl said, Or maybe he liked falling on his butt in front of all his friends.

Now a white-haired stickman with no shirt was bending over him, touch touch touching him all over, like looking to see if he was wearing a bulletproof vest, doing some very nervous mouthbreathing, with a silver cross hanging down, and around his nipples were sprigs of white hair.

Oh boy, oh God, said the stickman. Say something, pal, can you talk?

And he tried to talk but nothing came and tried to move but nothing moved.

Oh God, said the stickman, don't go, pal, please say something, stay here with me now, we'll get through this.

What crazy teeth. What a stickman. The stickman's hands flipped around like nervous old-lady hands in movies where the river is rising and the men are away. What a Holy Roller. What a FIRPO. A Holy Roller FIRPO stickman with hairy nips and plus his breath smelled like coffee.

Listen, God loves you, said the stickman. You're going, O.K., I see you're going, but look, please don't go without knowing you are beautiful and loved. O.K.? Do you hear me? You are good, do you know that? God loves you. God loves you. He sent His son to die for you.

Oh the freaking FIRPO, why couldn't he just shut up? If the stickman thought he, Cody, was good he must be FIRPO because he, Cody, wasn't good, he was FIRPO, Mom had said so and Daryl had said so and even Mr. Dean in Science had told him to stop lying the time he tried to tell about seeing the falling star. The announcers in the booth above the willow began weeping as he sat on Mom's lap and said he was very sorry for having been such a FIRPO son and Mom said, Oh thank you, thank you, Cody, for finally admitting it, that makes it nice, and her smile was so sweet he closed his eyes and felt a certain urge to sort of shake things out and oh Christ dance.

You are beautiful, beautiful, the stickman kept saying, long after the boy had stopped thrashing, God loves you, you are beautiful in His sight. ♦

A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE INVENTION OF OSCAR WILDE

Critics, filmmakers, and playwrights are celebrating Wilde as a gay martyr who was an enemy of Victorian convention. They're all wrong.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

ONE of two sure things that can be said about Oscar Wilde is that he would not read any of the books being published about him today. "All books that try to prove anything" was an important item on his list of things not worth reading, and just about all the vast recent Wilde literature—"Distance, Death and Desire in Salomé," "Allegorical Performance in 'Dorian Gray' "—groans under the burden of proof, point-scoring, thesis-making, and, you often get the feeling, thesis-winning. The other sure thing is that he would read them all: a man who spent his life trying to make certain that no one would ever forget him would be ecstatic to know that no one has. "There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about" was Wilde's most famous gag on this point.

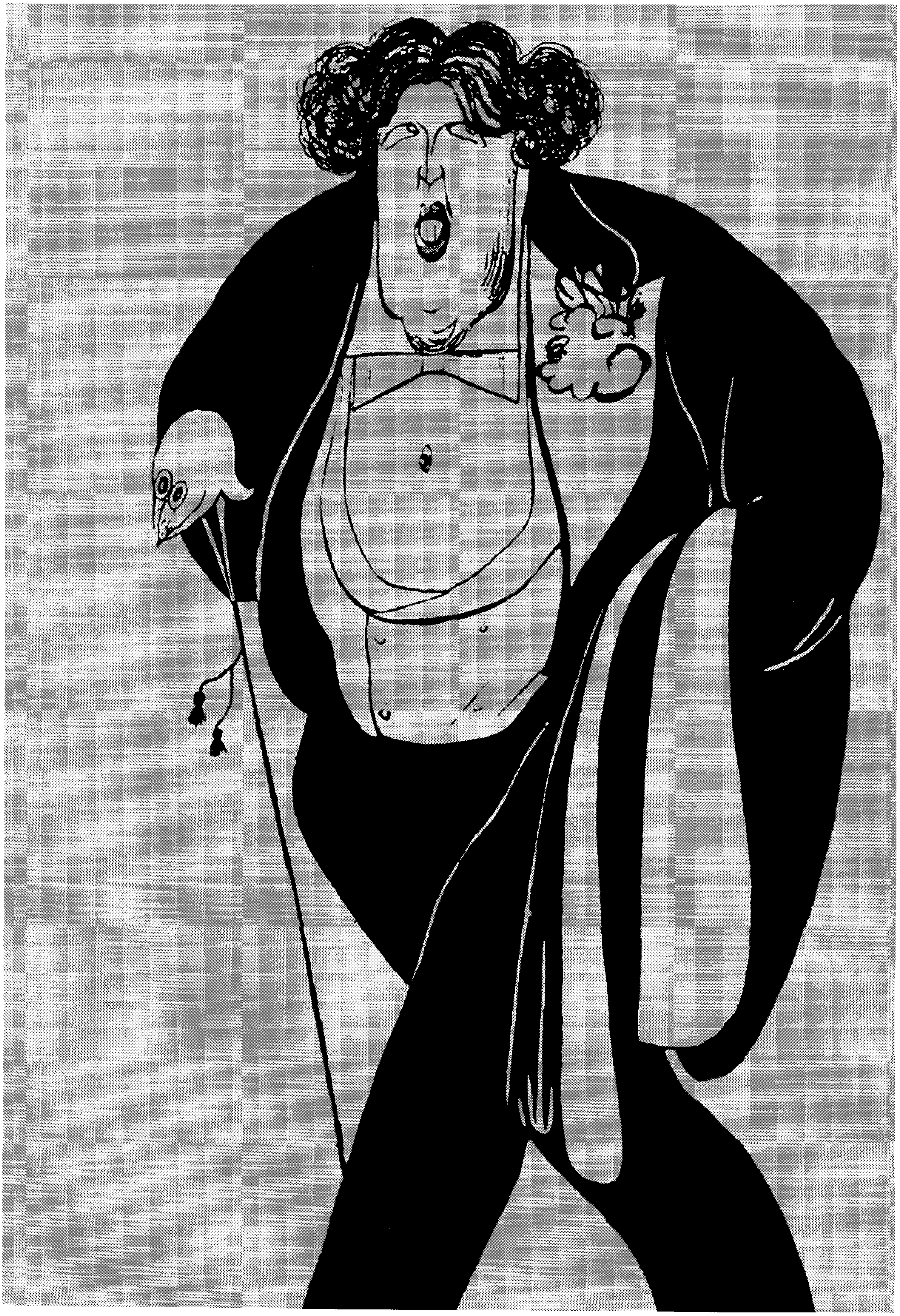
In the open space between those two sure things—between the aesthetic Wilde, who sincerely believed in the religion of pure art, and the sensational Wilde, who invented the role of talk-show guest before there was a talk show to welcome him—he has become a genuinely pop, rather than a mere cult, figure. Along with the explosion of professorial writing, there's the new play by David Hare, a new movie with a perfect impersonation by Stephen Fry, and a long-running documentary play by Moisés Kaufman, which opened last year Off Broadway.

One reason for Wilde's longevity has to do with his literary generation. All his cohorts—George Bernard Shaw, Frank Harris, Max Beerbohm, G. K. Chesterton—are still alive on the page: they were funny guys, and they expressed themselves in wisecracks; Wilde was the most famous because he was the funniest and his wisecracks were the best. Another reason he has stuck around so long is that he was gay, and was martyred for it. At a time when gay sensibility has been as much in the ascendant as Jewish sensibility was thirty years ago, the first gay saint naturally assumes a huge role. (Thirty years ago, Updike's utterly typical writer was a Jew in his forties with a block; today, he would be a gay man in his twenties with a screenplay.) It has come to seem as much of an obligation for non-gays to understand gay sensibility as it once was for non-Jews to understand Jewish sensibility, and the obligation is carried out with the same fascination and anxious, not-that-there's-anything-wrong-with-that tolerance—mixed with an odd sort of envy, rooted in the realization that, as Nicholson Baker has suggested, gays are fortunate in still having a closet to come out of. Writing is made of exits and entrances.

Our turn-of-the-century Wilde is not just a gay martyr but a postmodern one, too—a pomo homo, in the words of one enthusiast. His belief that made-up things were better than real ones, that masks were superior to faces, gives some plausibility to the idea that he was a "precursor" of postmodernism. But this reëvaluation, too, has a heavy price, for it makes him hostage not just to sexual politics but to academic politics—lifts him into the never-never land of post-structuralist discourse, where everything must be understood as a social construction but all the social constructions end up looking more or less the same, like corporate headquarters on Sixth Avenue. Meanwhile, what the professors used to be drearily good at—putting a text in context, giving a sense of what was original and what was just the way they did things then—is exactly what you will almost never find in the new academic literature on Wilde. In Michael S. Foldy's intelligent "The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality and Late-Victorian Society," for instance, the index is dense with references to Lyotard, Deleuze, Bakhtin, and Derrida. But you won't find a single reference there to Beerbohm or Chesterton or Henry James, all of whom had very clear ideas about what late-Victorian society was like, where Oscar Wilde was placed in it, and why what happened to him happened. Once Wilde is removed from his circle, the most period thing about him—his journalist's taste for reversible-raincoat paradoxes and his paint-by-numbers stabs at moral instruction—is made to seem the most original. Meanwhile, the most original thing about him—his invention of a form of comedy as pure as Mozart—is regarded as a sweetener, to be apologized for, or proved not actually funny.

From these three sources—pop iconography, the needs of sexual apostolicism, and academic fashion—something like a kitsch-Wilde myth has arisen and been set in place, and it seems hard to dislodge. He was, we are to think, a daring homosexual who invented a deliberately amoral and challenging style, deliberately provoking and scandalizing the establishment and bourgeois culture, until at last he went too far, and they brought him down. The belief in this Wilde can be literally blinding. Even Richard Ellmann, the author of the most coherent (though not always the most insightful) biography, included among his plates a "portrait" of a cross-dressing Wilde, "in costume as Salomé"—which, as Wilde's grandson Merlin Holland has recently

Max Beerbohm caricatured Wilde on the brink of disaster and remarked that his friend had become "gross in his relations with people."



pointed out, was actually a picture of a Hungarian singer named Alice Guszalewicz, playing the part long after Wilde's death. She looks nothing at all like Wilde, in or out of drag, and yet the image was eagerly accepted a decade ago because it fit the current academic preoccupation with transvestism and "gender construction." Many of the new Wildes of the academic literature will surely turn out to be Alice Guszalewiczes.

The truth is odder, more interesting, and more human than the cardboard saint. As Stephen Fry writes, "To picture him primarily as a gay martyr *avant la lettre* is, I think, to play into the very hands of those who brought him down a hundred years ago." Wilde was among the most popular middle-class entertainers of the day, and earned the dislike of the social radicals for his conformity. He loved bourgeois respectability so much that he went to court to defend it. His trouble came not from his sexual practices but from his denial of them—not from what he did but from denying in a legal document that he had done it. (Sound familiar?) If he deserves a place as a postmodern, or, anyway, late-century, hero, it's less for the rules he broke than for the things he tried to reconcile. He didn't just want to have his cake and eat it. He wanted to have his cake, eat it, franchise a bakery chain with his name on it, defend the cause of pure pastry, and somehow get credit for both abstinence and epicureanism. Just like the rest of us.

"ALL women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his." Wilde became like his father and was haunted by his mother. It is a rule of life that we repeat our parents' evils, or perhaps it is that their troubles are familiar ones, and, since we're bound to have troubles, we might as well share theirs. So the sons of alcoholics become alcoholics, the abused become abusers. Still, it is hard to believe that the son of a man whose career was ruined by getting involved in a libel suit about his sex life would feel compelled to let his own career be ruined by launching a libel suit about his own sex life, but that is the case with Oscar Wilde. One of the many virtues of the literary editor Frank Harris's 1916 biography of Wilde is that it begins in the right place, with an account of Wilde's father's trial for libel, in Dublin in 1864, which was more or less what his son's trial would be thirty-odd years later. (Harris's book has been maligned because he is not reliable on details, and reports as verbatim exchanges that have obviously been reconstructed from memory. But it remains the sharpest and most psychologically credible account of Wilde's life and tragedy, written in the right tone of exasperated love, and it includes an afterword by Shaw that is one of the shrewdest things ever written about Wilde.)

Wilde's father, Sir William Wilde, was a leading Irish surgeon and eye specialist, who had a reputation for leaving a family behind in every village he visited; his mother, who wrote under the pen name of Speranza, was one of the great women of nineteenth-century Ireland, a passionate nationalist poet and saloniste. A disturbed young girl named Mary Travers accused the elder Wilde of seducing her while she was under chloroform. Lady Wilde wrote a haughty, dismissive letter to the girl's father, and Mary Travers responded by suing the Wildes for libel. The trial was the scandal of the day in Dublin, and ended with a finding against Dr. Wilde, though he had to pay only a farthing's damages. The trial diminished Dr. Wilde, and left him with a taint of sexual adventure. Oscar's mother, who was the real power in the house, seems not to have felt the apparent disgrace, and to have reinterpreted it in the family history as a moment of vindication, vaguely bound up with the Irish cause. The historian Patrick Horan has recently made an argument that Speranza's presence, in various guises, hangs over all of Wilde's life and writing. It's certainly true that behind a lot of what appears reckless in Wilde's conduct was a touching desire on the part of a naturally bookish boy to fulfill his mother's appetite for the grand romantic gesture.

Wilde arrived at Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1874, and absorbed the available mishmash of high-Victorian sentiment from talking to Pater and reading Arnold, and their pious aestheticism remained the bedrock of his thinking. He was a very good student, winning a double first in classics and the Newdigate Prize in poetry for a set-piece poem on Ravenna. (A sample of his pastoral style, from "Charmides": "And soon the shepherd in rough woolen cloak / with his long crook undid the wattled cotes.") The artificiality of his early poetry was

YOU WANT A SOCIAL LIFE, WITH FRIENDS

You want a social life, with friends,
A passionate love life and as well
To work hard every day. What's true
Is of these three you may have two
And two can pay you dividends
But never may have three.

There isn't time enough, my friends—
Though dawn begins, yet midnight ends—
To find the time to have love, work, and friends.
Michelangelo had feeling
For Vittoria and the Ceiling
But did he go to parties at day's end?

Homer nightly went to banquets
Wrote all day but had no lockets
Bright with pictures of his Girl.
I know one who loves and parties
And has done so since his thirties
But writes hardly anything at all.

—KENNETH KOCH

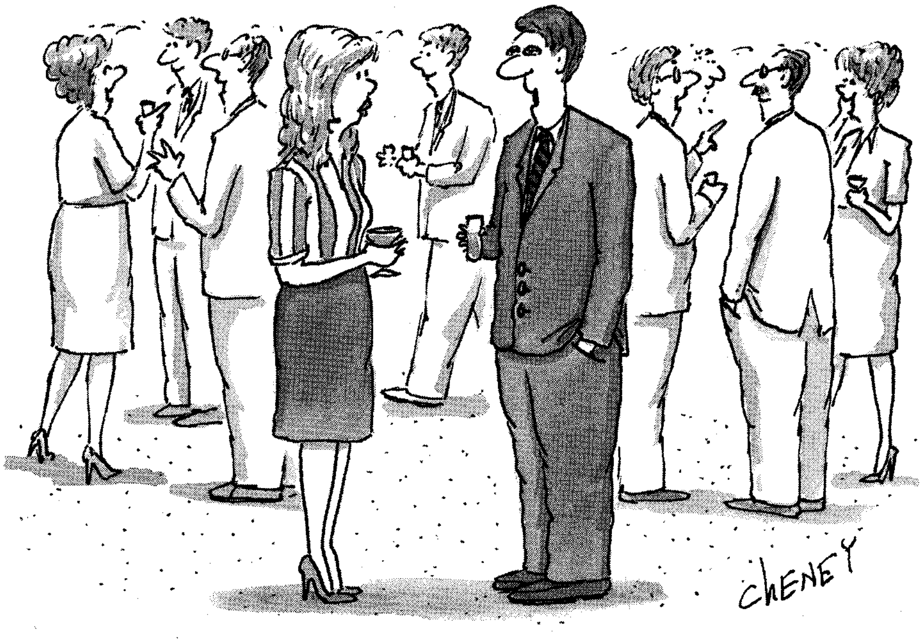
something he never really escaped, at least when he was writing "high." What's striking is not just the borrowed cadences but the gauche dependence on stage properties.

It was in his talk, and in the journalism that he began to write soon after he came down from Oxford, in 1878, that a real genius emerged. Grub Street as an enemy of promise is an old theme, but there is a certain kind of highly sensitive and fine-tuned aesthete who actually benefits from doing miscellaneous journalism. Dr. Johnson was one, and Wilde was another—a writer who is essentially a talker, and who somehow needs to have the urgency of talking imposed on his writing. And then Wilde found that he was equipped to supply editors with what they wanted, or what he made them want: provocation and paradox in neat packages, and every Wednesday. This is not to say that Wilde's jokes don't add up to a view. They do. But, in the journalistic mold, his impulses were habitual and practical—just what works—rather than ideological and thought through. He threw jokes into the papers the way First World War generals threw infantrymen over the parapet. They were all on the same front, and headed in the same direction, but it would be a mistake to see them as a disciplined unit. (Curiously, the post-Marxist critics, eager to see the subversive intent in Wilde's compulsive reversals and paradoxical phrases, forget the essential Marxist lesson, which is that you should pay attention to how a man makes his living before you start parsing what he writes.) Wilde's affinity for journalism was so strong that he eventually spent two years editing a women's magazine called *The Lady's World*. When he took it over, he changed the name to *The Woman's World*, and helped invent the still current women's-magazine formula of campy frivolity and feminist earnestness.

He first made his way in society as much by overflowing, radiant good humor as by competitive, top-this wit. In December of 1881, on the basis of little more than good talk, bad poetry, and a reputation as the original of the aesthete Bunthorne in Gilbert & Sullivan's genial "Patience" (which had had its first performance earlier that year), he set out on a lecture tour in America. He didn't have a lecture written, but his choice of America as the place to make money and a name for himself was a sign of enormous instinctive shrewdness. He must have sensed that the showbiz sensibility that was already part of the American legend would perfectly suit his slightly oversized style of dandyism. What looked pushy in London would look subtle in New York. In most of his memorable episodes before his American adventure, he is the butt of someone else's humor. (Wilde to Whistler: "I wish I had said that." Whistler back: "You will, Oscar, you will.") But in America the mint Wilde bons mots—"I have nothing to declare except my genius," Niagara Falls must be "one of the earliest, if not the keenest, disappointments in American married life"—began to emerge. Or maybe it was just that for the first time he was in a place with plenty of reporters, notebooks open, waiting to write it all down.

Just as shrewdly, he balanced his reputation as a wit with a reputation as a sincere improver. After taking a stab at lecturing on "The English Renaissance," a subject whose borrowed abstractions left his audience baffled and bored, he made a hit lecturing on "The House Beautiful"—essentially turning the aesthetic doctrines of Whistler into personal-shopper-style advice. In New York, he discovered, as generations of English journalists have since, a culture that can tolerate any provocateur (cf. Howard Stern) as long as it is reassured that there is a Basically Worthwhile Individual underneath. His mixture of hard wit and easy material opened America to him—he was a success even out West, when he lectured miners in Colorado—and, as much as anyone, he helped establish for Americans the look and style of the classy celebrity. In New York, he sat for a portrait photographer with the unforgettable name of Napoleon Sarony, who did twenty-seven poses of him. It is a modern photographic series, with changes of hair, clothes, position. Wilde poses, takes direction, looks sweet, sage, effeminate, virile, all dressed up and all dressed down. What you see in the pictures is not exactly dandyism—real dandies, from Montesquieu to Max Beerbohm, would have cringed at such commercial self-display—but the pop version of dandyism that leads directly to Cole Porter and Fred Astaire and even to Truman Capote.

Wilde followed his American triumph with an extended stay in Paris. There he failed to make a dent either in society or in literary life. Paris was as distinguished a cultural capital as the world has ever seen, and Wilde, with his long locks and wisecracks, was out of his depth, and knew it. (And, if he hadn't, the French would soon have let him know. They are good at that. Victor Hugo actually fell asleep while Wilde talked.) But he had the good taste to recognize that, though a cub himself, he was among real lions, and he replaced as a personal ideal the winsome



"I'm not really a journalist. I just play one on the evening news."

piety of late Pre-Raphaelitism with the mad arrogance of the *poètes maudits.*

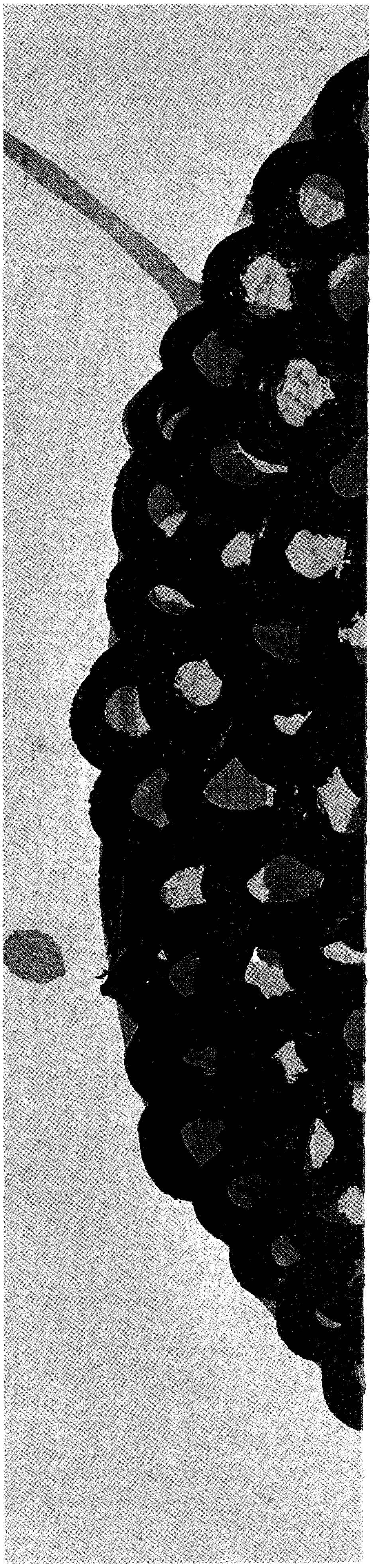
In 1883, Wilde returned to England. The books that he wrote on coming home are broken-backed. "The Picture of Dorian Gray," the earliest full-length Wilde work that is still widely read, mixes up some of his sharpest epigrams with some of his loopiest overwriting. Its first hundred pages are terrific; as Frank Harris remarked, Wilde had talked it all out in living rooms beforehand. Lord Henry Wotton is Wilde's mouthpiece, and the first repository of the wonderful flow of apparent paradox. But the book is also full of passages like this: "He devoted himself entirely to music, and in a long, latticed room, with a vermilion-and-gold ceiling and walls of olive-green lacquer, he used to give curious concerts, in which mad gypsies tore wild music from little zithers, or grave yellow-shawled Tunisians plucked at the strained strings of monstrous lutes." Certain sections even sound uneasily like a fin-de-siècle Judith Krantz: "When he had stretched himself on the sofa, he looked at the title page of the book. It was Gautier's 'Émaux et Camées.' Charpentier's Japanese-paper edition, with the Jacquemart etching. The binding was of citron green leather, with a design of gilt trellis-work and dotted pomegranates." Everything but the price.

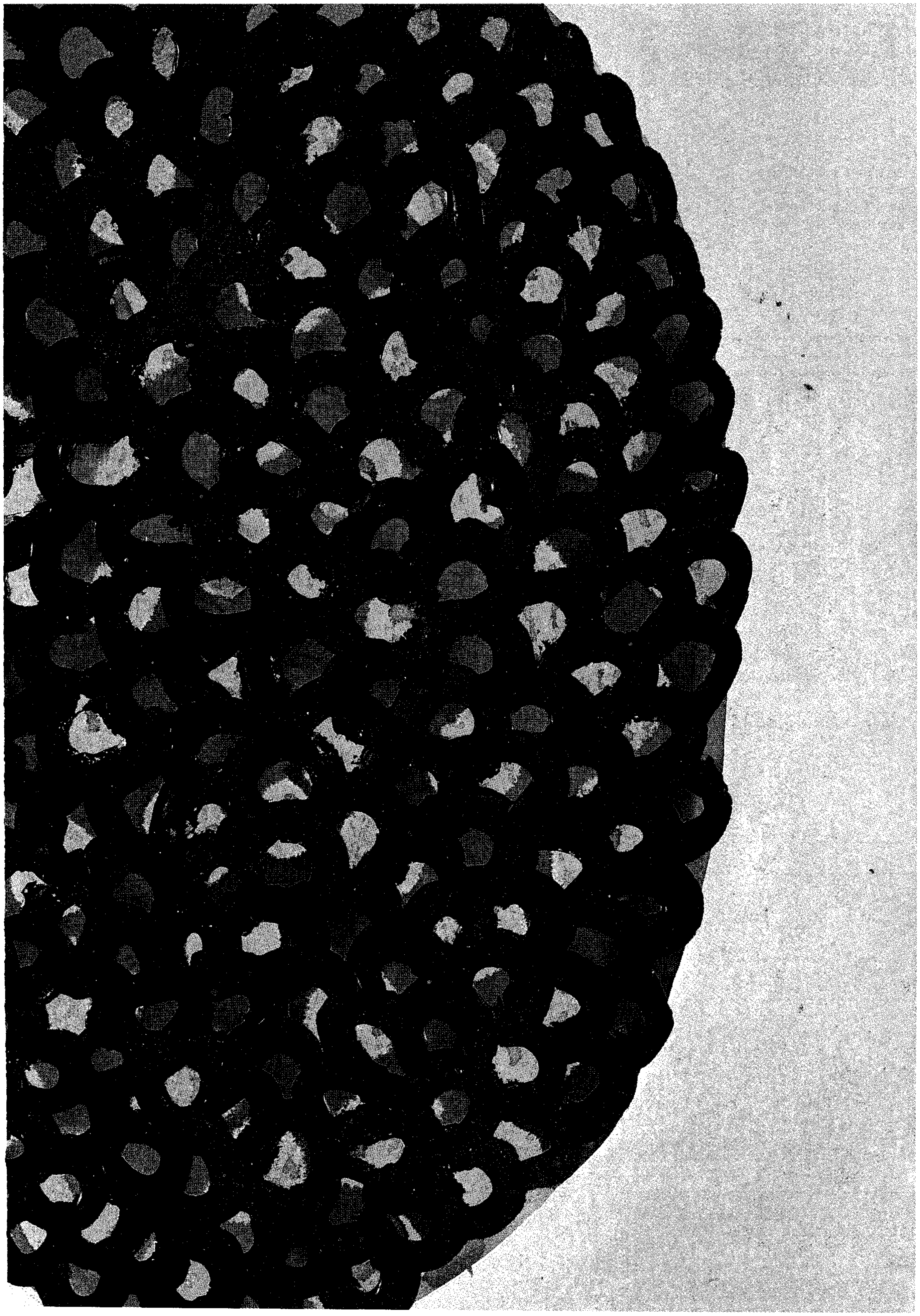
It is important to see how forced Wilde's writing can be when he is torn from his epigrams, in order to be reminded of how fresh the epigrams are. They are all that lives in "Donan," and they were the suds of the four well-wrought comedies that he wrote beginning in 1891: "Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," "An Ideal Husband," and, above all, "The Importance of Being Earnest." Seeing that his jokes did not need all that olive-green lacquer took an enormous leap of courage and imagination. Bit by bit, the content of comedy, and particularly the social content—the realistic motives, the serious social questions—was stripped away, and what was left was a form as stylized as a waltz. Writing the plays, and especially "Earnest," involved something more than just Wilde giving himself the license to do what he did best. It involved a reëvaluation of his own aestheticism. He saw that the objects of his religion of art had become so creaky and stage-bound, and even vulgar—Dorian at his concert—as to be absurd. If the aesthetic was becoming absurd, why not let the absurd become aesthetic? He saw that one could remake the art-religion of Pater and Arnold not by withdrawing from life into a desiccated realm of beauty—that realm had already been vulgarized—but by choosing to see the vulgar common round of farcical middle-class engagements and courtships and misunderstandings as though they were themselves a work of art. For an artist, this was in some ways a very conservative move; it brought him so close to a journalist-humorist, and eventual Wilde enemy, like Jerome K. Jerome that, if both men's names were lost, some future scholar would probably think that the author of "Three Men in a Boat" and "The Importance of Being Earnest" were the same person. (Jerome: "I like work. It fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours.") Which is not to reduce Wilde's style to a period style but to see how sympathetically he engaged with the idea that ordinary Victorian idlers had about them some of the charm that he had once only felt confident bestowing on imaginary shepherds.

The epigrams that fill the plays and

REËMERGENCE

Yayoi Kusama must be the greatest comeback story of the nineties. In a few short years, the work of this sixties enfant terrible has moved from the periphery of critical consciousness to some place very near the center. Kusama began showing her eccentric yet prescient work in New York in the late fifties: first there were the "Infinity Nets," very large paintings of interlocking geometric patterns, and by 1962 she had turned to covering furniture and other objects with stuffed canvas phalluses. Now that issues of gender and a revival of organic abstraction (much like the corpuscles in the early gouache "Seeds," at right) are taking up so much gallery space these days, Kusama is being hailed as one of the preëminent artists to have emerged in the sixties. The current survey of her work from 1958 to 1968 at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (it arrives at MOMA *in July) suggests that we can believe the hype.*





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make them memorable are often called “paradoxes,” but Wilde’s “paradoxes”are rarely paradoxes in the strict sense. They are reversals—what comedians call switch ’ems. Far from being a device peculiar to Wilde as an enemy of authority and tradition, they’re a stylistic tic—the stylistic tic—of the period, rooted in the enforced liveliness of journalism, and useful in driving home pretty much any point you like. Chesterton used the same aphoristic style to drive home the necessity of reactionary medievalism, Shaw to drive home the need for Ibsenism and social revolution, and Beerbohm to drive home the importance of driving home and staying there. The style is easy to play with because the reverse of the obvious thing almost always contains an element of truth. Most of Wilde’s paradoxes—“The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it,” “He has no mask beneath his face,” and so on—are of this “true more often than you might think” variety rather than of the “Here’s a thing you’ve never thought” kind. This is not to say that they are always mechanical, just that their wisdom is worldly rather than subversive, realistic rather than romantic.

In “Dorian Gray,” for instance, Lord Henry Wotton is breathlessly presented as a decadent, but if you actually unpack what he says he is closer to a man of sense on the eighteenth-century model. “The reason we all like to think so well of others is that we are all afraid for ourselves.” “We praise the banker that we may overdraw our account, and find good qualities in the highwayman in the hope that he may spare our pockets.” “When we are happy we are always good, but when we are good we are not always happy.” “The only things that one can use in fiction are the things that one has ceased to use in fact.” “Every experience is of value, and, whatever one may say against marriage, it is certainly an experience.” “The truth is rarely pure, and never simple.” These are sane, rueful, accurate observations. Wilde’s paradoxes are funnier than other people’s, and they are smarter about life.

Wilde is misplaced as a romantic subversive wit because he belongs to another tradition. Modern aphoristic wit almost always comes in one of two flavors. One descends from Pascal and is truly paradoxical and subversive of reason, the other descends from La Rochefoucauld and confirms common sense. Wilde’s jokes are most often of that kind. The Pascal lines are based on the premise that the only way to get past knowledge to faith is through implicit logical failures in the working of pure reason: “The heart has its reasons that reason doesn’t know.” In Wilde’s time, Shaw and (in another way) Chesterton wrote that kind of aphorism. “Reason is always a kind of brute force; those who appeal to the head rather than the heart, however pallid and polite, are necessarily men of violence. We speak of ‘touching’ a man’s heart, but we can do nothing to his head but hit it.” Chesterton wrote that, working within the Pascalian tradition, and it can be fairly called subversive.

The other kind of epigram depends on our knowledge that social existence presents a series of constant, uneasy contradictions. We know ourselves to be faithless, selfish, competitive, cruel, glad of our friend’s failures, pleasure-seeking, and so secretly lecherous that we can hardly get through an afternoon, while our entire social life depends on the pretense that we are congenial, social, love to share, and just like the way our friend’s wife looks in that dress. The kind of epigram that begins in this knowledge tries to be embracing rather than instructive, to reconcile us to the necessary contradictions of worldly life by making the contradictions look natural, inevitable: life’s like that. Beerbohm is a master of this kind of aphorism, but the greatest master is Wilde. When Chesterton says that the danger with a reasonable man is that all he has left is reason, he is stuffing Michel Foucault into a capsule. But when Wilde says that a cynic is the man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing, he is making a worldly point, not a cynical one. (A cynic wouldn’t see the joke.) Wilde was subversive of piety but never really of conventional society. In fact, it was his love of social conventions—his cleverest-guest-at-the-dinner-party side—that exasperated genuine radicals like Shaw and Harris. “A snob, both by nature and training” was their joint verdict. The twin supposed evils of conventional Victorian morality—an excessive concern for appearances and an acceptance of the relationship between hypocrisy and social order—are what Wilde valued, too. “A little sincerity is a dangerous thing, and a great deal of it is absolutely fatal." He valued the façade of manners in his own way, as the material for comedy, but he could not have imagined, or thrived, in another kind of world.

The ordinary world of late-Victorian bourgeois life has, indeed, no more elegant celebrator than Wilde. That's why in "The Importance of Being Earnest" suburban humbug is made into the permanent daydream of an idle Eden. (Eventually, it became Wodehouse's Blandings Castle.) Evil, however, he was unable to imagine except in the stock terms of Dorian Gray's debauchery or the comic terms of Lady Bracknell's anger. The world of comfort in which Wilde's people move—the bound books in the library and the summer-afternoon light filtering into the bay windows—is made palpable and material. Wilde understood good times beautifully, and had a hard time imagining what bad ones would be like. So, naturally, they came.

THE story of Wilde's trials and his suffering has been told so many times that, like the Kennedy assassination, it seems likely to be turned over again and again until some deeper, and presumably final, explanation can be found for what happened. The facts are simple enough, although their plain sense is sometimes overlooked. In 1884, Wilde had married a beautiful girl named Constance Lloyd. As far as anyone can tell, it seems to have been a love match, and they had two boys, Cyril and Vyvyan. But Wilde told Frank Harris that he was revolted by his wife's body after childbearing: "When I married, my wife was a beautiful girl, white and slim as a lily. . . . In a year or so all the flowerlike grace had vanished; she became heavy, shapeless, deformed." There is a photograph of Constance Wilde being embraced—leaped on—by their son Cyril when he was five. It is a lovely and spontaneous display of affection, of the kind that only a loving mother would get, but Constance, who a few years before had been a picture of pale Pre-Raphaelite beauty, does have the thousand-yard stare of the exhausted mom.

By the end of 1887, Wilde seems to have been involved in his first extended "same sex" romance, with a young man named Robbie Ross. Then, in 1891, he met Lord Alfred (Bosie) Douglas, one of two beautiful homosexual sons of the Marquis of Queensberry, and they began their famous, doomed affair. Bosie, by all accounts, was the more sexually experienced of the two—"So far from his leading me astray, it was I that (unwittingly) pushed him over the precipice" is how he put it later—and he introduced Wilde to the underworld of rent boys, male prostitutes. His father was the same Marquis of Queensberry who codified the rules of boxing, and he seems to have been in many ways a throwback to the brawling, violent aristocratic world of the Regency bucks. Under the weird but apparently sincere impression that Wilde and Bosie were merely "playing at buggers" in order to *épater* the bourgeoisie, he began a campaign against Wilde's relationship with his son, which eventually led to his leaving his card at Wilde's club inscribed "For Oscar Wilde posing Somdomite."

The fatal gesture of a life of gestures was Wilde's decision to sue Queensberry for libel. This was the pivot and first cause of everything that followed, and, particularly for Wilde's intimates, it was the most bewildering element in the entire affair. Why do something so obviously reckless and self-destructive? Wilde's subsequent sufferings were so real, and his persecution so savage, that it can seem hard-hearted to dwell on this point. But it was the point all his friends dwelled on forever after. What possessed him?

There was, surely, simple hubris. Wilde's loving and resolutely unshockable friend Max Beerbohm, said afterward that Wilde, with the success of his plays, and his head turned by aristocratic attention, had become "gross not in body only—he did become that—but in his relations with people." He drew a caricature of Wilde on the brink of disaster that makes him look like a ghastly minor Roman emperor. It's also possible to say that he courted martyrdom, since martyrdom for him meant a French trial, like Baudelaire's or Zola's—a ringing statement in a courtroom. And, of course, there was Bosie's hatred of his father, and his desire to see him humiliated, which drove Wilde on, even in the face of the combined arguments, over lunch at the Café Royal, of George Bernard Shaw and Frank Harris, not easy arguers to ignore.

Beyond that, his faith that he could win such a suit reflected a deep and irra-

BRIEFLY NOTED

HELL, by Kathryn Davis (Ecco; $22). A nineteen-fifties suburban villa, a doll house (presumably inside it), and Moss Cottage, the home of Edwina Moss, a nineteenth-century Martha Stewart, are the across-space-and-time characters of this gripping, hallucinatory novel. The presiding genius of all three residences is Antonin Carême, pastry architect and chef to Napoleon. (Edwina is mad for Carême's blancmange recipe.) Davis's writing is so extraordinarily visual that she is practically a video artist: the reader closes the book as if waking from a dream.

THE CHILDREN, by David Halberstam (Random House; $29.95). This wonderfully rich account of the students' civil-rights movement is crammed with history and humanity. The story begins in 1958, when James Lawson, a young African-American who had spent three years in India as a Methodist missionary, moved to Nashville and entered Vanderbilt's Divinity School. Nashville was a center of universities, both black and white, and Lawson began offering workshops on Gandhi's theory and technique of nonviolence to student volunteers. In 1960, his first recruits held a sit-in to desegregate downtown lunch counters. Halberstam follows the stories of eight students who, through the next decade, risked their lives as freedom riders and in voter-registration campaigns, and changed America.

THE HACIENDA, by Lisa St. Aubin de Terán (Little, Brown; $23.95). In 1968, Lisa St. Aubin, a romantic seventeen-year-old given to wearing full Edwardian dress, defied her mother by marrying Jaime de Terán, an unstable Venezuelan aristocrat she barely knew. When, on their wedding day, her husband claimed to be a bank robber, she felt perversely reassured that the couple had something in common: "He was a fantasist and so was I." This funny, frightening memoir describes the seven years that she spent rebuilding de Terán's derelict Andean estate and attempting to bolster their bizarre marriage. As her husband fell prey to increasingly violent fantasies, St. Aubin was forced to abandon her nostalgia and become an exemplary manager—first of his plantation and, finally, of her fate.

RED BLOOD AND BLACK INK, by David Dary (Knopf; $30). If the lore of cowboys and outlaws and Indians weren't so appealing, the central myth of the Old West would be the story of its newspapers, as it is vividly related here. They had names like the Los Angeles *Broad-Axe* and the *Weekly Chronoscope*, and their language—part Macaulay, part polecat, part jackass—was a potent mixture of idealism and scurrility. Nearly every editor believed in the nobility of his calling, and nearly every editor hoped to have his calling adulterated by profit. Their credo was summed up by the first man to run a newspaper west of the Mississippi, Joseph Charless, who said, "I shall preserve the liberty of the Press as long as I am able to control one."

tional yet universal belief of modern people: that because our sexual life takes place in private it is therefore conducted in secret. Wilde genuinely could not believe what common sense should have told him—that consorting with prostitutes of either sex at the Savoy was something that would sooner or later come out. The rent boys Wilde had been involved with were mostly in their twenties, but some of them were younger, some a lot younger, and they were all poor, and desperate in the way of the Victorian poor. "Feasting with panthers" was Wilde's famous description for his time with the rent boys, but, given their youth and desperation, it might be how the boys would have described it, too.

WILDE'S behavior in the courtroom is so sympathetic, and we are so inclined to root for him, that it is easy to miss the turning point in his exchanges with the opposing counsel, Edward Carson. In their first exchange, Wilde had much the best of the back and forth ("I have never given adoration to anyone except myself," etc.) until Carson asked if he had ever kissed a boy named Walter Grainger. "Oh, dear no," Wilde replied. "He was a peculiarly plain boy. He was, unfortunately, extremely ugly. I pitied him for it." One wisecrack too many—and no one has ever suffered more for this occupational weakness. With that remark, the laughter stopped, and would never return. It was not only the obviousness of the sexual joke. It was that the joke demonstrated, with fatal neatness, the relation between aestheticism and sexual appetite, while Wilde had been forced to pretend that the two had nothing in common.

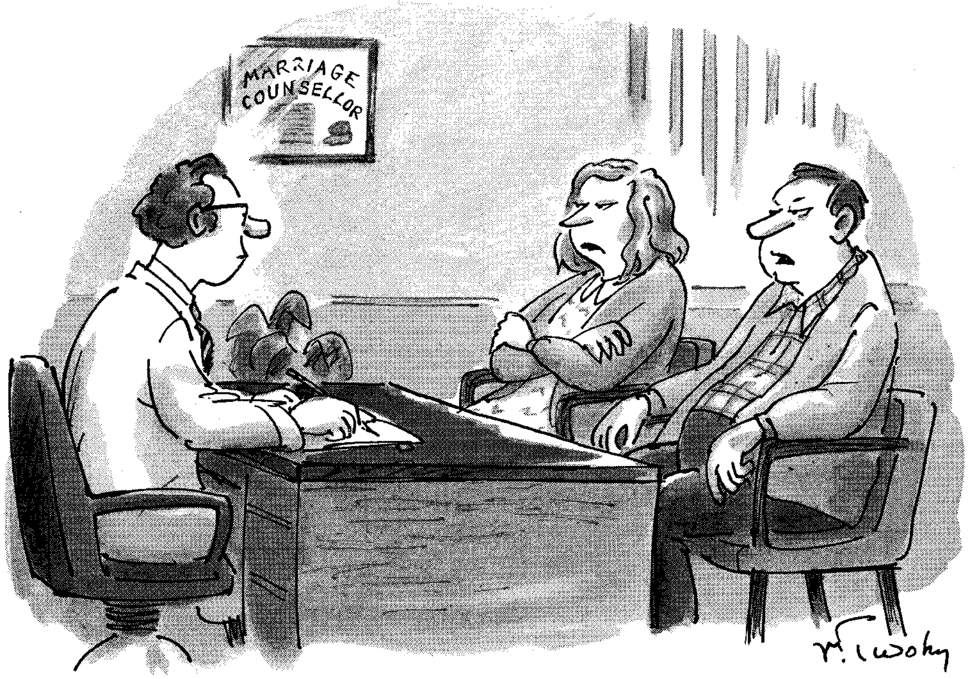
Carson was what would now be called a "strong" reader of Wilde, and had spotted the essential contradiction in Wilde's position: if your aesthetic ideal includes the pleasures of the senses, it is hard to pretend that you are not sensual. A duller man than Wilde could have bullied his way through the list of boys to argue that he was fascinated by straying youth, was conducting research, was engaged in reform, and so on. Gladstone himself had said things like that (perhaps sincerely) about his own engagements with prostitutes. But Wilde had backed himself into a corner where he had to maintain such a high pitch of disinterested aestheticism that he had to pretend not even to know what the rent boys were there for. Carson knew that if he could catch Wilde out on this point he would break the witness.

Julia Prewitt Brown, in a thoughtful book on Wilde's aesthetic, insists that what landed Wilde in the courtroom was his "will to truth." But the tragedy was that the truth was the one thing he didn't let himself express. He wanted to defend his sex life, but he had put himself in a position where he had to pretend that he didn't have one, and it was too late for that. Even in the stirring speech about "the Love that dare not speak its name"—which Beerbohm called a triumph of courage—he was compelled to keep up what he knew to be a pretense that the love was "that deep, spiritual affection that is as pure as it is perfect." Wilde is much more clear-headed about himself and his fate than some of his admirers have been since: "Of course once I had put into motion the forces of Society, Society turned on me and said, 'Have you been living all this time in defiance of my laws, and do you now appeal to those laws for protection? You shall have those laws exercised to the full. You shall abide by what you have appealed to.'"

Once the evidence was out, there was nothing to do but drop the prosecution. By now, it was too late to let it all recede. The question for historians is whether the turnabout prosecution of Wilde that followed was the inevitable consequence of the law's taking its course or a special act of persecution on the part of the state. An argument has been made that Queensberry got the government to go on with the prosecution of Wilde after the libel suit was dropped by threatening, in effect, to blackmail the Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery, who was said to have had an affair with another of Queensberry's sons.

But perhaps there is no need to seek a deeper reason. Prosecutors prosecute; it is what they know, and there is no greater pleasure than having the upper hand over someone widely regarded as "arrogant." The prosecutors did make a reasonable effort to give Wilde time to leave the country. All his friends tried to get him to leave, too. Harris says that he even arranged a steam yacht for him, and though the yacht may be fantasy, surely the basic idea is true. Wilde sat drinking hock-and-soda, poisoned by some cocktail of fatalism, blind love, and Irish bravura, or mother love.

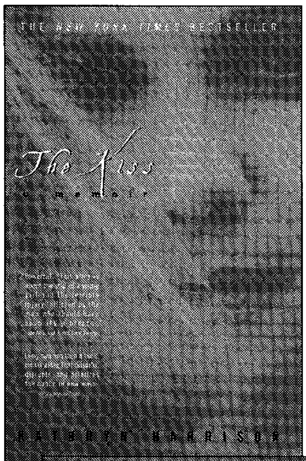
It has been argued, often under the rubric of "queer theory," that Wilde was the deliberate target of an ideological crusade aimed not just at homosexuality but at an aesthetic of deviance that was implicit in his writings. Foldy suggests that the whole of Victorian society was engaged in the trials of Oscar Wilde, "expressing fear, hatred and intolerance for everything that was not bourgeois, useful, rational, procreative, right-thinking and patri-



"No heroic measures."

(Advt.)

Centuries ago, heroic tales and the news of the day were related by bards—professional raconteurs who told stories artfully, adding their own unique flourishes. Happily, bards still exist—though the pages of books have replaced the town square as their forum.


THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
The Kiss
A MEMOIR
KATHRYN HARRISON

Kathryn Harrison's proficiency as a storyteller has already been acknowledged: two of her novels have been selected as *New York Times* Notable Books. With ***THE KISS*** she delves into her own past to bring us a true story of obsession, chronicling with remarkable candor her love affair at the age of twenty with her previously estranged father. Harrison's controversial book is a brave, intimate memoir that powerfully explores a taboo subject and imbues it with a haunting and unexpected beauty.

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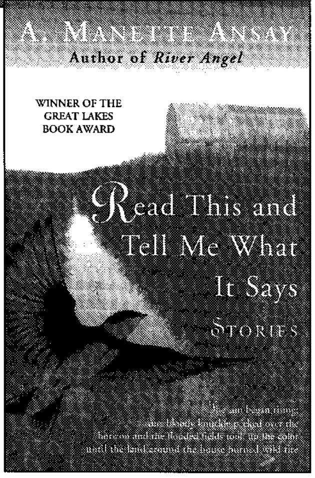
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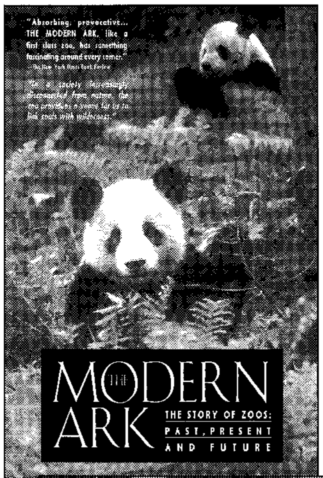
In ***THE MODERN ARK***, nature writer **Vicki Croke** takes us behind the scenes at America's zoos, where groundbreaking research is being conducted to preserve the animal kingdom and redefine the relationship between ourselves and the Earth's wild creatures. The extent to which our zoos have evolved over the centuries parallels our own evolution as a species, and Croke's insights should be required reading for anyone who cares about animals, both captive and free.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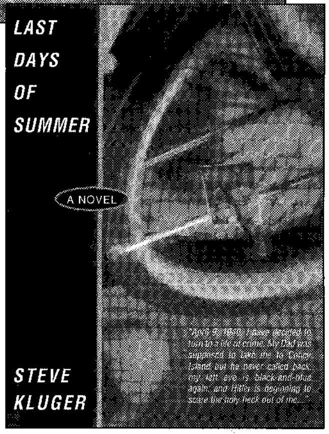
THE STORY OF ZOOS: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

A story told entirely through letters, notes, matchbook covers, report cards, and telegrams, **Steve Kluger**'s ***LAST DAYS OF SUMMER*** remembers 1940s New York with humor and great affection. Though undoubtedly nostalgic and very funny, this is a novel that takes a serious look at loneliness and need—and at the palpable strength of the human heart—as it explores the developing relationship between an annoyingly persistent little boy and the New York Giants' rookie third baseman whom he has selected as a father figure.


LAST DAYS OF SUMMER
A NOVEL
STEVE KLUGER

We'll talk again.

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otic. In effect, then, Wilde represented a constellation of fears and ideas which was antithetical to the representative middle-class values of the nation, particularly as they were construed in terms of class, gender, and sexuality, and as they were construed in moral and political terms as well." But it is hard to make the argument stick. "The world has been in some ways so unjust to him that one must be careful not to be unjust to the world" was Shaw's way of putting it. Wilde was among the most successful writers of his time; the same elements in his work that "society" with its "bourgeois morality" was said to have feared and hated—the outrageousness (which was never really so outrageous), the love of conscious artifice, the sending up of social rules as camp games—were those which had made him wealthy and admired. His name was taken down from the boards advertising "The Importance of Being Earnest" and "The Ideal Husband" after his arrest. But the point is that the shows went on, at least for a while. Like the man in the Jewish joke, the producers disapproved of the fellow who believed he was a chicken, but they needed the eggs.

The law has a certain horrible momentum of its own, and anyone who comes in contact with it can be destroyed. P. G. Wodehouse nearly got himself tried for treason during the Second World War for making broadcasts from Berlin (they were innocuous, but England was burning to the ground—that was the problem); had he been, it would probably now be said that newly Socialist England had turned violently against his country-house vision. But he slipped away and became a knight and a classic. The truth is that there was nothing inevitable about what happened to Wilde, and it is painfully easy to see how it could have been avoided. "Ordinary cruelty is simply stupidity" was Wilde's own emphatic aphorism after his experiences in prison, and it was this stupidity, rather than complicated encoded intelligence, that acted against him. Any kind of sex in a courtroom is incendiary. Once the spark is lit, it can burn down a whole social architecture; sometimes the structure is so vividly illuminated by the flames it can seem that the architecture must be the underlying cause of the fire.

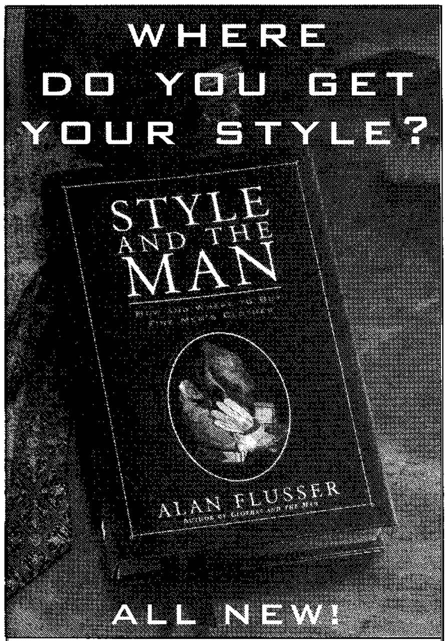
But anything can burn. A decade earlier, Sir Charles Dilke, the most promising politician of his day, had been driven from public life by a heterosexual scandal hardly more rational than the one that brought down Wilde. The essential lesson here is that you should run a million miles to the North Pole in your underwear and hide under a snowdrift rather than ever be in a position where people can discuss your sex life in a courtroom.

WE fill with indignation when we read of Wilde's time in prison, because he was unprepared for suffering. The disproportion between the wrong and the punishment is vast; and Wilde's prison writing is deeply moving because he is a man unwilling to be martyred, a man in some ways typical of all of us, who had stumbled into a circle of Hell. There is a Little Nell side to his imprisonment, which leaves the impression not of a man martyred but of a child abused. He must have sensed this, too. There is nothing more affecting or less self-conscious in his work than his letters of protest on behalf of the children imprisoned alongside him. Almost immediately after he left prison, he wrote a letter to one of the newspapers protesting the firing of a warden who had committed the crime of giving cookies to a small child. "The terror of a child in prison is quite limitless. I remember once in Reading, as I was going out to exercise, seeing in the dimly lit cell opposite mine a small boy," he wrote. "The child's face was like a white wedge of sheer terror. There was in his eyes the terror of a hunted animal. The next morning I heard him at breakfast time crying, and calling to be let out. His cry was for his parents. From time to time I could hear the deep voice of the warder on duty, telling him to keep quiet."

Wilde ended his life a Catholic, and his insistence on seeing his own suffering in Christian terms is sometimes a disappointment to his current admirers, who tend to view that insistence as a withdrawal from a recognition of the social persecution, a "decontextualizing" of what happened to him: Wilde the Catholic was in denial. His Catholicism has become as much an embarrassment to his admirers as his homosexuality used to be. But there is a sense in which his Christianity, like Auden's years later, was conceived not in opposition to his homosexuality but as a reflection on it, and it ennobles the most exasperating thing about his last years: his reconciliation with Alfred Douglas, long after it should have been clear to him—indeed, he had announced that it was clear to him—that Bosie had been poison. ("He once played dice with his father for my life and lost," Wilde had said once.)

Auden, with Wilde's tragedy in mind, came to believe that the homosexual, in exchange for his estrangement, can be given an important part of the Christian vision. In his view, the isolation, the romantic inwardness, and the lack of an obvious social "product" (children, estates) gave the homosexual liaison a special closeness to a pure Romantic vision, which, in turn, has a partial but real relation to Christian love, unconditional love, love outside reasonableness or the execution of a social contract. In his great poem on Christian themes, "For the Time Being," Auden has a semi-chorus of "romantics," whose sexual orientation is clear in the context, and who sing, "Pray for us enchanted with / The green Bohemia of that myth / Where knowledge of the flesh can take / The guilt of being born away/Simultaneous passions make / One eternal chastity: / Pray for us romantics, pray." That was surely something like the prayer—remorseful, because life is tragic, but unapologetic, because there is never a reason to apologize for love—that Wilde had wanted to pray on his deathbed.

Frank Harris, a hard man, concluded that Wilde's special contribution to literature had been "kindly happy humor . . . sunny humor . . . summer-lightning humor." It is a disarming conclusion, but not a false one. On the day Wilde was released from prison, two prison officials escorted him to a train station, hoping to return him to liberty as discreetly as possible. But at the sight of a budding bush at the station he opened his arms and cried, "Oh beautiful world! Oh, beautiful world!" Knowing that only one prisoner would say such a thing, one of the warders turned to him, chiding, "Now Mr. Wilde, you mustn't give yourself away like that." But he still does. His queerness—his image as a romantic outsider—will surely diminish as the world becomes more easily reconciled to its own incorrigible queerness. His gaiety endures. ◆



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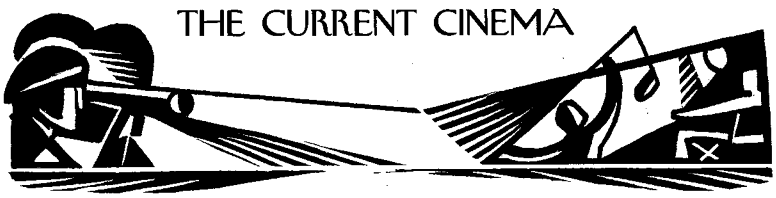
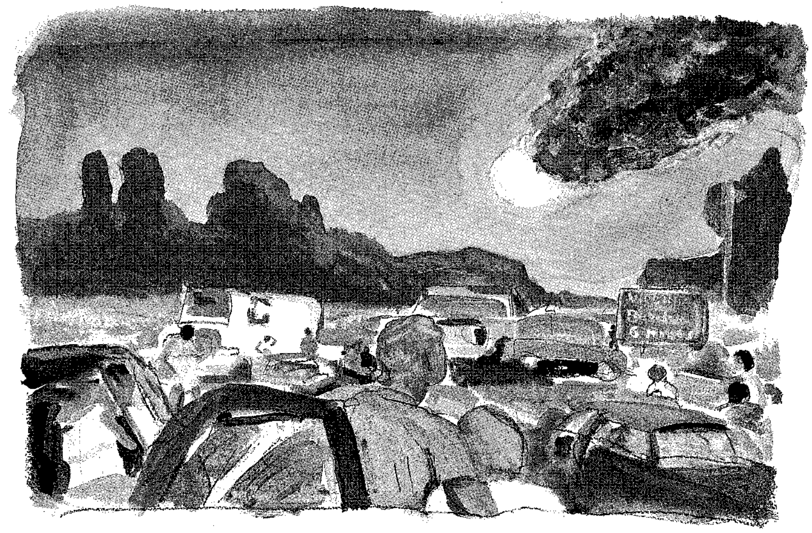


APOCALYPSE NOT

Another blast from Mimi Leder.

BY ANTHONY LANE

THE new DreamWorks picture, "Deep Impact," stars Téa Leoni as Jenny Lerner, who discovers that everything we love and respect on this planet is about to be wiped out. Since Jenny is a TV reporter in Washington, you might have thought that this counted as company policy, but for some reason she looks dismayed, as does everyone around her. For heaven's sake, we're only talking about a five-hundred-billion-ton comet heading straight toward us. It's not the end of the world.



Who will stop the rock? "Deep Impact" cashes in on millennial nerves.

STEVEN LACK

The film was directed by Mimi Leder, who obviously decided after "The Peacemaker" that one-nuke movies were for wimps. She has now upgraded to a story so blast-happy that at one point an entire arsenal of Titan warheads is loosed off into space and she doesn't even bother to show it. The script was an unlikely collaboration between Michael Tolkin, who wrote "The Player," and Bruce Joel Rubin, who was responsible for "Ghost." At a wild guess, I would say that Tolkin had something to do with the chirpy stuff at the beginning and the end, and that Rubin filled in all the blubber in the middle.

The first half hour of "Deep Impact" certainly gives you a rush, from the moment a Virginia schoolboy named Leo Biederman (Elijah Wood) spots a nameless blur in the sky to the trail of lucky breaks which leads Jenny, one year later, to trip over the big bad secret. The world—played, in a bold piece of casting, by the United States of America—is facing an E.L.E., or Extinction Level Event. Various moves, announced by President Tom Beck (Morgan Freeman), are under way to counter the threat. First, a crew of astronauts will be sent to rendezvous with the comet, land on its surface, plug it with nukes, and jolt it off course; second, all Americans will be required by law to get in touch with their feelings or, failing that, their relatives; third, there is to be an immediate freeze on wages, prices, and anything that resembles a sense of humor.

This is a shame, because Leder has assembled a bunch of performers who are capable of rescuing any film from Extinction Level. Téa Leoni's jerky, hiccupping style is so fresh, and she looks so great in her natty Washington whites and pale blues, and her tendency to wear pearls in the face of impending catastrophe is just so *right* that you can't believe the film will be dumb enough to cramp her. Once Jenny has been promoted to anchorwoman, however, something freezes in her eyes, and she devotes her spare time to juggling the hangups of her divorced parents, played by Vanessa Redgrave and Maximilian Schell. This is in many ways a fine movie for senior citizens: the ripe, sagacious commander of the space mission is an easy ride for Robert Duvall, and I felt a surge of relief ripple through the audience at the mere appearance of Morgan Freeman. He makes such a strong and sympathetic President that Al Gore will be watching this picture with terror in his heart.

On the other hand, the middle-aged will have good reason to feel aggrieved, for "Deep Impact" proposes that, with Western civilization on the point of finishing its coffee and asking for the check, a million Americans will be bused to Missouri and locked into limestone caves for two years, while the fatal dusty winter caused by the comet rages overhead. The deal is that, apart from specialists such as doctors, military personnel, and personal-injury lawyers, and not counting a selection of our choicest plants and animals, only people under fifty will be picked to enter the refuge. In short, you can take your flamingo but not your grandma. The worst part of this is that young Leo, who has earned himself a free pass to the caves, wastes a sizable chunk of the movie trying to get his boring girlfriend to come with him. Is he crazy? Here is his chance to spend two years dutifully propagating a new species, and all he wants to do is hold hands. But then this is a DreamWorks production, with Steven Spielberg as one of the executive producers, so making out is verboten.

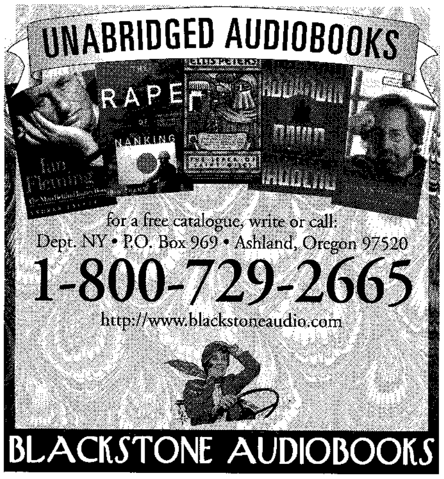
Such puritan rigor is one of the reasons that "Deep Impact" becomes so glum to watch. It asks how we should script the penultimate chapters of our lives, yet refuses to countenance the possibility that, aside from those worthy souls who wish to heal their psychic wounds, there might be large sections of the population who would prefer to hold a toga party. The film is cashing in on millennial nerves, but in truth the only reliable guides to correct eschatological behavior are the Book of Ecclesiastes, which advocates at best a penitential caution, and the lighter Horatian or Catullian model, which involves packing in as many kisses as you decently can before the final hooter. Nobody in "Deep Impact" has much fun: we get a full hour of moping before a piece of comet rolls up and dives head first into the Atlantic. The splash causes a thousand-foot tidal wave that sweeps along at more than a hundred miles an hour; quite rightly, everyone in the theatre howls like a fiend when the water hits the Eastern Seaboard and thunders down Madison Avenue without staying clear of the bus lanes. But the special effects are like computer-generated De Mille—vast, roaring, and rather obvious, with a cardboardy grayness that whispers of V.D.U. screens. Leder gives you buckets of grandeur without a speck of high-toned wackiness. As the wave rolls in, why not have a guy in a lemon-and-lime wetsuit perched on top of the Empire State Building with a big grin and a surfboard?

The trouble, I guess, is that the surfer would require a subplot to himself, and the film is already tearing itself apart trying to pay court to the many interest groups. Jenny has our attention for the first third of the picture, whereupon we switch to the exploits of the space crew; then it's back to lovey-dovey Leo and noble President Beck. All of them toil and sweat under sentence of death: there's too much of the higher vulgarity here, the kind that one recalls from Stanley Kramer's "On the Beach," and not enough of the lower vulgarity, the kind that links "Deep Impact" to the cheesy disaster flicks of the nineteen-fifties and sixties. Does Leder not realize that the destruction of the world is a subject so engulfing that all it's good for is a cheap thrill—that the only thing to do with our appetite for the apocalyptic is to tease it, then feed it? I left "Deep Impact" feeling hungry for more, and what really intrigues me is the thought of Téa Leoni heading home after a long shoot to be with her husband, David Duchovny, who was busy making the "X-Files" movie at the time:

"Hi, honey. How was your day?"

"Oh, the usual. Aliens tried to suck my brains out through a straw. Yours?"

"So-so. A lump of flaming rock the size of Central Park fell out of the sky. You want to eat in?" ♦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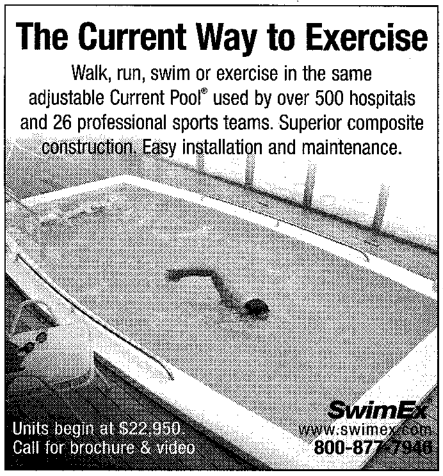
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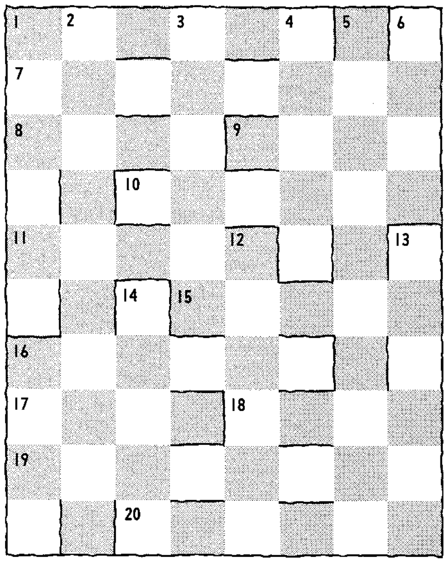


ACROSS

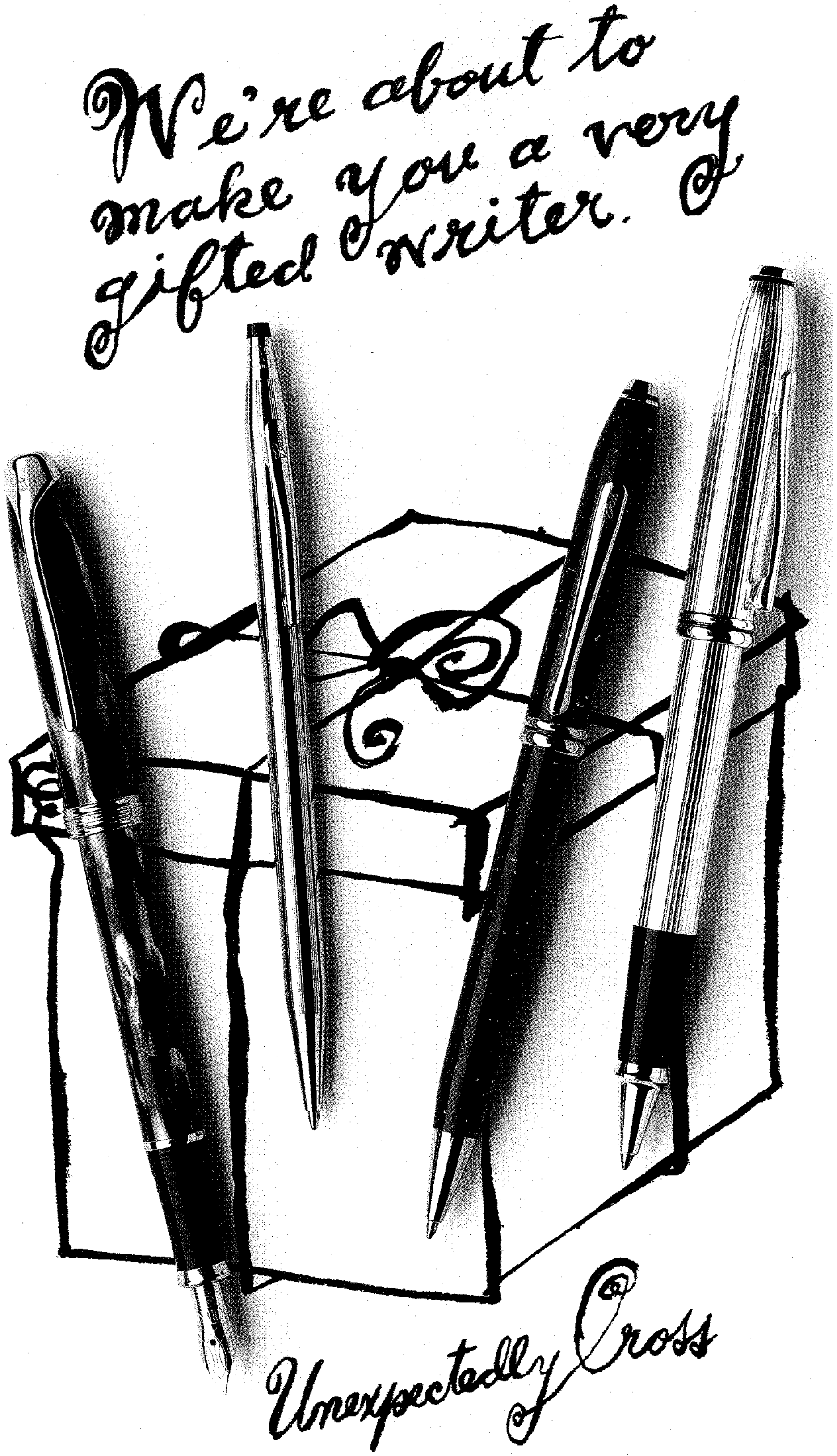
1 Celebrity is against church formality (6)
7 Desert rider arrived with lascivious look (8)
8 Help Lincoln at source of trouble (4)
9 Take out sticky fruit (4)
10 Used abrasives sadden converts (6)
11 In Mexico, Peter roped bucks (5)
15 District Attorney describes hit play (5)
16 Female grad corrected manual (6)
17 U.S. President not finishing lively dance (4)
18 Pavlova put article forward and backward (4)
19 Having time, existentialist finally took five-year trip (4,4)
20 Listen to pleasant type of rock (6)

DOWN

1 Rogue sampling from Italian shrimp dish (6)
2 Call to Beth to change dining-room linen (10)
3 Delay bothered trader (6)
4 Manages finals in English, Science, Algebra, and Economics (5)
5 Concludes Ted turned up with furs (10)
6 Brought up loaf for the audience (4)
12 Speak publicly about felon's last fine (6)
13 A shaggy creature's found under rightmost of Greek boats (6)
14 Pair of guards fall behind prison camp (5)
16 A. & P.'s east alcove (4)

• •

The solution to puzzle No. 43 appears on page 59. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.



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SUNKEN TREASURE

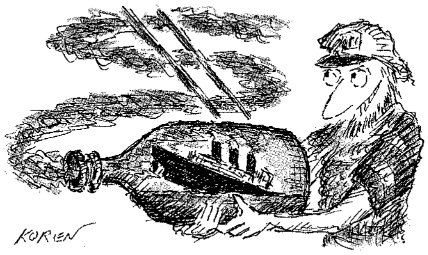
BY DANIEL MENAKER

The producers and actors are not alone in making money out of Titanic. The Scottish carpet manufacturer Stoddard Sekers International has also made a pile. The company was among the many that kitted out the original boat, laying two-inch-thick carpet throughout the first-class compartments.—*The London Times.*

Something will eventually make more money than Titanic. I just don't see anything out there right now, or on the verge, that could.—*Hollywood producer Laurence Mark, in Entertainment Weekly.*

At 4 P.M. on February 16, 1912, James Powell, the riveter who drove in Titanic's second-to-last rivet, saw several pied seagulls perched on his mansard roof when he got home from his final day of work on the ship. According to his wife, he suffered a fit in the tub that night, shouted out a few nautical expressions, and then, before she could help him, slipped down into the bathwater and practically drowned! She later sold that bathtub to a junk dealer for a mere three shillings!!

A set of early blueprints for Titanic included a reinforced, inflatable rubber gasket to go around the entire vessel at the waterline, providing true unsinkability but also limiting the ship's maximum speed to 3.5 knots. These blueprints were discarded but were later recovered by a Southampton chandler who had nothing whatever to do with Titanic. Not stopping to think that someday they might be worth something, he used them to start a fire for boiling water to make his tea!



Many of the workmen who built the ship found the upholstery on the settees in Titanic's parlor suites garish. As it turned out, the draper who provided that fabric was none other than a man called Robert Sinker! Well, all right, his name was Robert Griffiths. But his mother's maiden name was Hull!! And there are no records to indicate that Griffiths wasn't in fact the Southampton chandler's second cousin. What's more, as passengers were boarding the ill-fated vessel, Griffiths was safely ashore in his storeroom, pressing his attentions on his assistant. Mysteriously, nine months later, the same assistant gave birth to a child with a birthmark on her right shoulder that two or three people said looked a little like a smokestack! Eighty years later, an elderly woman bearing just such a mark—only now it had moved to her left shoulder—opened a stall in Brighton where she now sells photographs of the dermatological phenomenon!!

A ginger cat belonging to one Mrs. Choade began losing its fur ferociously the minute it was set down on the great vessel's deck. The cat—whose name is unrecorded but could well have been Titanicat!—continued to shed until it was entirely bald. When the ship sank, Titanicat miraculously survived for half an hour in the icy water and was plucked from the sea in a stiffened condition by a ship's laundress who could easily have had another coincidental name of some kind—Lizzie Stern, maybe! She sold the cat for not much more than a song to the Seamen's Bethel on Staten Island, where it became a mascot and was renamed Lucky. It died in its sleep thirteen years to the day after Titanic's second mate would have become eligible for his pension!

It's a well-known fact that the iceberg struck by Titanic broke into two parts a week after the collision. Many observers are pretty sure they saw a TV documentary that said the smaller part of the berg was spotted by a fishing boat off Greenland with six hundred and sixty-six puffins—never before seen at such a northerly latitude!—nesting on it. (Last week, a small-time mail-order company out of Bruges issued a new catalogue featuring one-ounce bags of shavings from what it claimed was a forty-pound remnant of the puffin section of the berg, inexplicably found afloat in the English Channel!) The larger part drifted south, and, according to the same source, it melted, evaporated, and then fell as rain into the reservoir for Bremen, Germany. Eventually, it reappeared as ice cubes aboard the Lusitania!

Taking into account box-office receipts, authors' fees for books and articles, salvagers' revenues, payments for expert testimony, and tchotchke retail purchases, each life lost from Titanic's disaster has generated an average of $22,658,117—or three times what the White Star Line paid to have her built! And there's no end in sight: I've heard about projections for the year 2012 which indicate that revenues realized from the tragedy will surpass the cumulative budget for the earth from the dawn of man until two days before that Night to Remember!!

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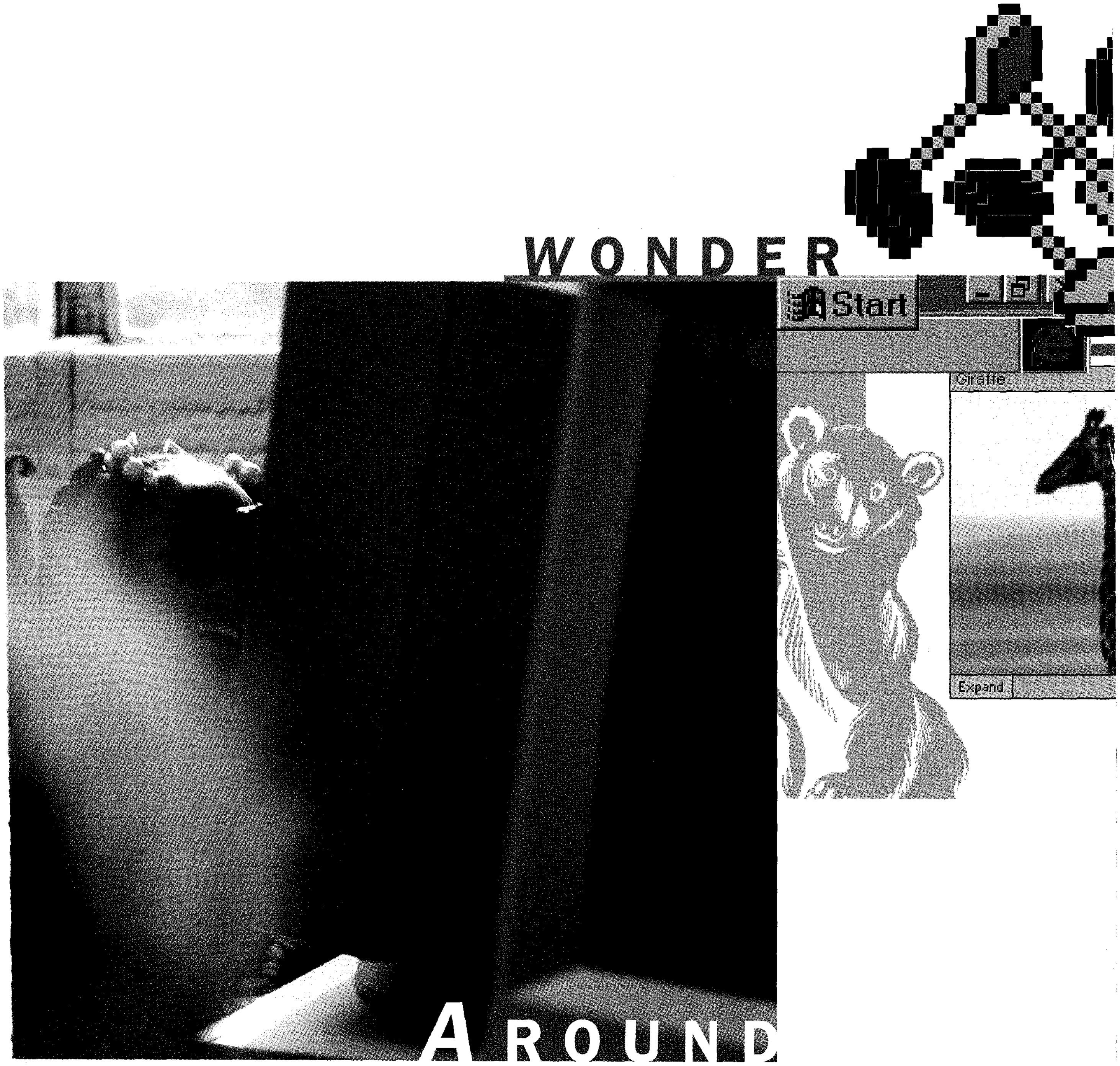
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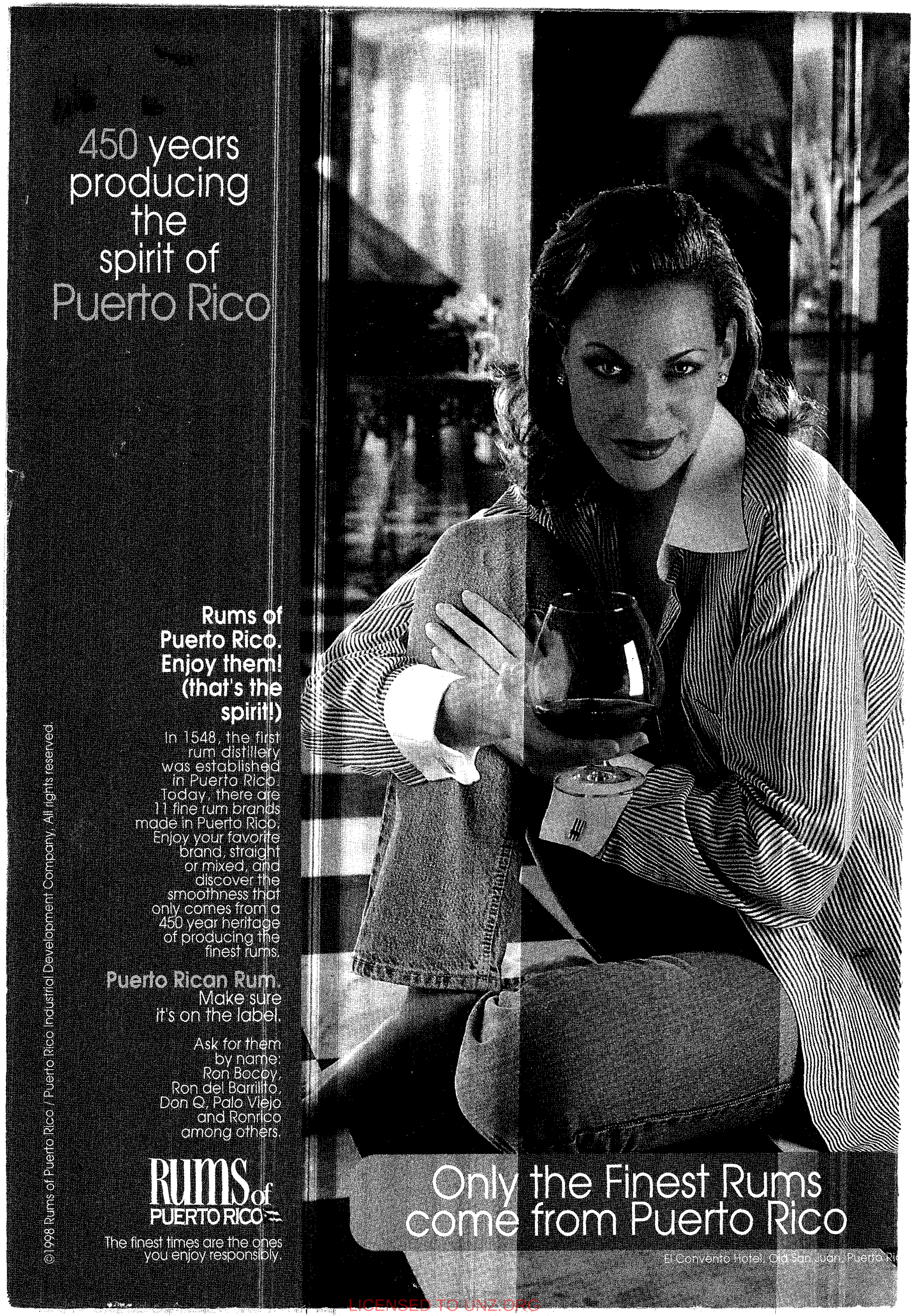

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